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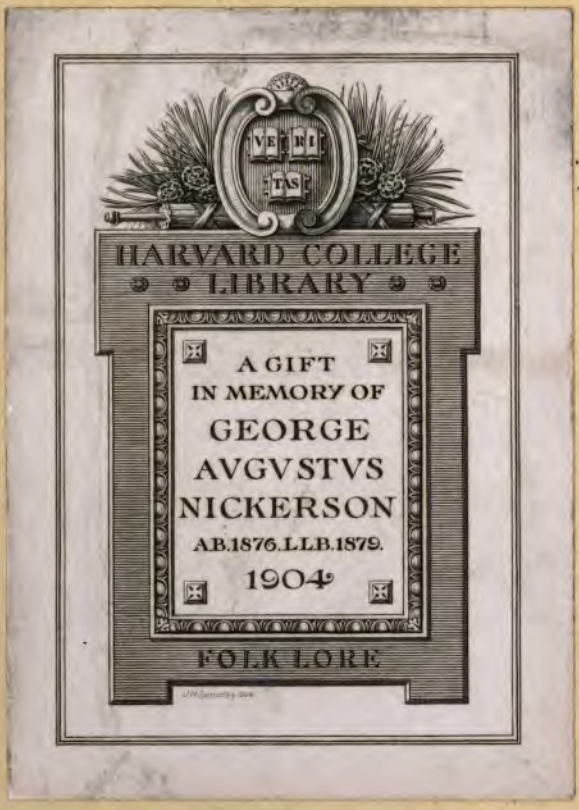

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TWO LECTURES

READ BEFORE

THE ESSAY SOCIETY

OF EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Richard Jones Esq.

"And now I sent my book to be printed in Paris, at my own cost and charges, without suffering it to be divulged to others, than to such as I thought might be worthy readers of it."

LORD HERBERT OF CHERBURY.

Oxford.

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HARVARD COLLEGE
DEC 27 1906
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Gift of
Mrs. C. F. Hoffman,

"He *will* write it," said the Bhow Begum, taking up her snuff-box, and accompanying the words with a nod of satisfaction and encouragement.

"He will never be so foolish," said my wife.

My wife's eldest sister rejoined, "He is foolish enough for any thing."

The Doctor, vol. i.

"Saint Bride and her brat,
Saint Colme and her cat,
Saint Michael and his spear,
Keep this buke frae harm and weir."

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TO

RICHARD COWLEY POWLES, ESQ.

President

OF THE ESSAY SOCIETY OF EXETER COLLEGE.

My dear Mr. President,

DO you recollect that immortal courtesy executed by the Ladies Seraphina and Angelica Arthuret, when Father Bonaventure entered the gallery at Fairladies? "the hoop petticoats which performed the feat seemed to sink down to the very floor—nay—through it, as if a trap door had opened for the descent of the dames who performed this act of reverence." With a bow of proportionable humility I would present myself before you and the Society on this occasion; perhaps if I had duly considered the absolute truth, that

> "Knowledge is like the heaven's glorious sun,
> And will not be deep searched with saucy looks,"

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I should have hesitated before rushing thus daringly into all the glories of a fair stream of type, meandering pleasantly through a broad meadow of margin: the summit of my ambition will be reached, however, should you consider the "Supernatural Beings of the Middle Ages" worthy of a place on the same shelf with Mr. Oldbuck's Essay on the right hand gauntlet of "Hell-in-Harness," and Dr. Dryasdust's Discourses on the Saxon Horn at York Minster.

If any thing could add to the audacity of my attempt, it would be the remarkable difficulties presented at the very first view of the subjects I have chosen:—well said old Du Bartas—

> "Most famous people's dark antiquitie
> Is as a wood; where bold temeritie
> Stumbles each step."

And whilst this is peculiarly the case with all mythological subjects, "The Pleasaunt Londe of Faërie" claims for itself a preeminence of obscurity, and the hapless individual who launches his bark on this "ydle lake," feels much the same as a certain eminent member of this Society would do, if when he

> "Bares his broad bosom to the buxom wind,"

and floats down the swift stream of the Isis, his course

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should be impeded by divers masses of duckweed and water lillies—

> "And all the way before him, as he goes,
> Triton his trumpet shrill" ———

but that shake of your ambrosial curls, Mr. President, tells me that I am approaching interdicted ground; so with all their difficulties and "errors manifold," I submit these imperfect attempts to the consideration of the Society,—and trusting that the tree which has been planted may continue to flourish vigorously as at present—that its leaves may not wither or its boughs fall—and that distant generations "may sing among the branches,"

I remain,

my dear Mr. President,

yours most sincerely,

Exeter College,
June 15, 1840.

Richard John King

> "And with that worde, he with a sobre chere
> Began hys tale, as ye shullen after here."

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VENATOR.—This is a very little book—

PISCATOR.—That may serve to shew you it is for a very little fly.

The Complete Angler.

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On the Supernatural Beings

of

The Middle Ages.

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"The fair humanities of old religion,
The power, the beauty, and the majesty,
That had their haunts in dale or piny mountain,
Or forest; by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
Or chasms and watery depths: all these have vanished,
They live no longer in the faith of reason."

Coleridge,—Wallenstein.

"And see ye not that bonny road
That winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road of fair Elfland,
Where thou and I this night maun gae."

Thomas the Rhymer.

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Pax vobiscum, qui legitis.

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ON

THE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

OF THE

Middle Ages.

See p. 12.

THE similarity in the developement of the imaginative or poetical faculty, amongst nations the most widely separated by circumstances both of time and place, cannot fail to strike the most ordinary inquirer: although it has been asserted that this is the natural result of the formation of the human mind, it may fairly be doubted whether other causes have not also tended to such a conclusion; above all, the recent examinations into the religious systems of western and northern Europe, have shewn the strong probability, that as they are at present preserved to us in the Edda of the Scandinavians, and the poems and triads of Wales, they are the fragments of some earlier and more united whole: and the Teuton, the Northman, and the Celt, the farther back we are enabled to trace them, the less is their diversity of character. It must be recollected too, that the religion of these several races entered peculiarly and in a singular manner into the ordinary affairs of life and social intercourse; and a strange and mysterious power was believed

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to lie hid in the rude lay of the Scald, and the wild Runic rhyme of the Drött. Specimens of this primitive poetry have fortunately been preserved, although they have of course undergone alteration, and even re-formation, as the language changed. Such are some of the grants of the Anglo-Saxon monarchs: King Athelstane's, for instance, to the Minster of Beverley:—

"Als fre, mak Y the, as hert may thinke, or eye may se."

And again, of 'William King' to Powlen Royden, of

"My hop and my hop lands, With all their bounds, Both up and down, From heaven to erth, From erth to hell, For thee and thine, Therein to dwell, From me and mine, to thee and thine, By a bow and a broad arrow, When I. come to hunt upon Yarrow."

This language yields in elegance to the charter which commemorates the gift made by the Confessor to—

"Ranulph Peperkyng and his kindlyng, Of the hundred of Chelmer and Daneing, With Hart and Hind, Doe and Buck, Fox and Cat, Hare and Brock, Wild fowl with all his flock, Partrich, fesant, hen and cock, Green and wild, Stub and stock, To Keepen and to Yeemen with all hire might, Both by day and eke by night, And houndes for to hold, Good, swifte and bolde, Four greyhounds and six braches, For hare and fox and wild cattes."

When the Doomsters met beneath the sacred ash, or the Godordsmen in the wild mountain hollows of Iceland, their decisions were given in rhyme, and in a similar manner, the most ancient laws of the Stannary Courts of Devon and Cornwall, decreed by the judge, who sat on the summit of one of the wild tors of Dartmoor, "with his back to the sun and the storm," are highly poetical. Of the same nature is that remarkable feature in the religion of the North, the belief, viz. that to attack the "wolf of

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the wold" or the "griesly bear" without first challenging them, as to a duel, was illegal, and indeed unholy:[a] on some occasions, it was even necessary to summon a Tynewald court, and pronounce them liable to punishment in due form. If a beaver was killed, by the laws of Haco the Good, a fine of three marks was paid to the owner of the soil, "for bloodwite and hamesuken." Arising from this belief are the curious sentences passed by the courts of the middle ages for the banishment of rats, mice, and similar animals. "Three hogs," says the Burgundian Chronicle, "were hung for killing a child," and the Lord of Tilchatel required letters patent of Philip le Hardi, Duke of Burgundy, for the purpose of being allowed to set up a gallows to hang a sow, guilty of crime, and detained for judgment above five years. In the diocese of Autun the rats were excommunicated for the destruction they had committed, although they were allowed counsel and were fairly tried. Between 1522 and 1530 there were similar cases: even the caterpillars and snails of Grenoble were proceeded against with legal forms; and Gaspart Bailly, in the sixteenth century wrote a treatise, "Of the Proceedings to be taken against Animals," wishing to have them defended by Curators.[b] An examination of the Eyrbiggia and Hervarar Sagas, will shew how completely, in that early stage of society, the most ordinary events of life were considered as surrounded in some peculiar way with mystery, and looked on with awe. On all occasions of any importance, as at marriages, births, funerals, the setting out on a voyage, or the return home, the 'sorceress,' or 'wise woman,' had her own place at the board, attended with all the appropriate ceremony, and regarded with all the dread accompanying those who were believed to have

a Saga of Finboga hinom Rama.
b Chronicon Burgundiense.—Tristan le Voyageur.

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direct communication with an unseen world. One of the mort remarkable instances occurs in the Saga of Thorfinn Karlsefn; at a great yule feast of Thorkell's, a person of considerable consequence at Herjulfsness, in Greenland, a certain sorceress, named the "litel völva" was sent for to declare the fortunes of those who next summer were to set out on exploring expeditions to Newfoundland and those parts of North America which had recently been discovered by the Northmen. A lofty seat was prepared for her, having a cushion stuffed with hen's feathers. On her arrival, late in the evening, she was dressed in a blue kirtle with fillets hanging down, having a border of small stones; she had small balls of glass hung round her neck, and on her head a black cap of lambskin lined with white catskin; in her hand was a staff, with a brass top, set with stones; she had a girdle of dry bark, from whence a large purse of skins depended, in which she kept her magical utensils: there was prepared for her pottage of goat's milk, and the hearts of the different animals killed for supper; like the fierce sorceress Maimuna, she sung—

"A low, sweet, unintelligible song."

wherewith to charm the spirits of the air, or tutelary genii, "vast numbers of them," says the Saga, "crowded around to hear," and by their aid she gave answers to the questions proposed.[c]

These instances have been brought forward for the purpose of shewing how completely the religion of the North was bound up with the ordinary habits and modes of thinking of its votaries. At first sight, therefore, it would not appear improbable, that such thoughts, feelings, and creeds

c Historia Thorfinni Karlsefnii:—Antiq. Americ. p. 111.

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should continue to exercise strong influence long after Christianity had been introduced, and that the origin of the—

"Elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves."

is to be sought in the airy train which came over the "hazy sea" with Hu the mighty, and the "crowned phantoms" which thronged the illimitable halls of Valhalla. The first point therefore to be observed will be the remnants of these mythologies which are to be traced in the Legends and Superstitions of the Middle Ages. "And first," as Master John Heywood saith, "first of the fayërie, and of them some briefe stories."

The descriptions which we have recorded of the "pleasaunt londe of faërie," are at best indistinct and unsatisfactory; they are sufficient, however, to identify it with the famous "Flathinnis," or "Green Isle of the West" of the Celts, and perhaps the Asgard of the Northern nations. Long and difficult was the journey to these shadowy regions; but one remarkable peculiarity constantly recurs, the passing, namely, through a dark and narrow cavern or hole of a rock. Thus when Elidorus, a monk of Swansea, as we are told by Giraldus Cambrensis, when a child, was once in a dark hollow, overhung by the bank of a river, he suddenly perceived two little men, of pigmy stature, who offered to lead him to a country full of pleasures and delights: he assented, and followed them through a long subterraneous passage into a most beautiful country, adorned with rivers and meadows, woods and plains, but obscure, and not illuminated with the full light of the sun: all the days were cloudy and the nights extremely dark, on

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account of the absence of the moon and stars: the boy was brought before the King, who appointed him to attend on his son: all the men of the country were well proportioned and of a fair complexion, with long hair falling on their shoulders: they had horses and greyhounds adapted to their size: they neither eat flesh nor fish, but lived on milk made up into messes with saffron. The boy frequently returned to middle earth, and at last made himself known to his mother, declaring to her the manners, nature, and state of that people: being desired by her to bring a present of gold with which the region abounded, he stole the golden ball with which the King's son used to divert himself; but as he was entering his mother's house, pursued by two fairies who had witnessed the theft, his foot stumbled, and the ball was recovered by its former owners: from that time he was unable to discover the road to the Land of Spirits, although he had constantly traversed it before: he retained, however, his knowledge of their language. When they asked for water they said "udor udorum," and when salt, they said "halgein udorum;" words which prove the Fairies of Swansea to have been of genuine Welch descent. [d]

When the Queen of Fairy introduced Thomas of Ercildoun to her subterranean abode, they journeyed for three days through darkness up to their knees in water, and only hear the "swowyng of the flode."

> "It was mirk, mirk night, there was nae stern light,
> And they waded through red blude to the knee;
> For a' the blude that's shed on earth
> Rins through the springs o' that countree."

On this passage, Price,[e] in the learned essay prefixed

d Giraldus Cambrensis. Welch Itinerary, edit. by Sir Richard Hoare.
e Price's Warton, Preface (49.)

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to his edition of Warton's "History of Poetry," remarks, that we have here the "Ocean stream and Cimmerean darkness." The spot where Thomas laid his head on the lady's lap he considers to be the same cross way in which Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Æacus, held their tribunal; one of whose roads led to the isles of the blest, and the other to Tartarus. We shall return to the famous incident of the apple, whose taste bestowed upon Thomas "the tongue that could not lie;" but when we recollect the fact, that the Grecian mysteries, and those of the Celtic nations, were of the same origin, the similarity is at once explained. These mysteries were certainly of a twofold nature; for whilst they introduced the aspirant to that higher knowledge of divine things which was peculiarly their office, they, in so doing, typified the process which it was believed every soul had gone through in its passage to this lower world; and not stopping here, there seems to have been an actual representation of the passing the "water of death," an emblem which is found in almost all mythological systems, to the "Green Isle," or land of rest beyond.[f]

If we consider, therefore, the Fairy Land of the Middle Ages, to be in reality identical with the *νησοι μακαρων* of Greece, and the Flathinnis of the Celts, this dark passage through water is sufficiently intelligible: analogies, however, between the initiations to the Mysteries and the passage to Fairy Land occur in numerous other instances. "The Brigg of Dread,"[g] for instance, is found in both, and in some cases twelve distinct perils are indicated as hanging over those who were bold enough to attempt the journey. The voyage of King Gorm of Denmark[h] to the

f The Celtic tribes had numerous islands as Acherusiæ or burial-places; they still exist in the Highlands: scarcely a clan but has a burial-place on an island, either in a loch or at a short distance from the shore. Where the cairns occur on the main land, they are almost invariably on the side of a hill, facing the setting sun.

g Lyke Wake dirge—Border Minstrelsy, v. II

h Saxo-Grammaticus, Lib. VIII.

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mysterious abode of Geruth, affords examples of all these peculiarities: the passage of the river, the golden bridge, and the frail daughters of Guthmund, are all points which belong as well to the Land of the Svärtalfen as to the older mythology. Before concluding this branch of the subject, however, it may be interesting to know that Britain itself was at one period regarded as the particular abode of spirits who had forsaken their mortal body.

"All was this land fulfilled of faërie."

Procopius asserts, that the souls of those who die in Gaul are nightly transported to the shores of the Isle of Britain, and consigned to the infernal powers by the boatmen of Frisia and Batavia. These boatmen see no one; but at midnight a terrible voice calls them to their mysterious office: on the shore they find unknown boats ready for their departure: they feel the weight of the souls which enter, one after the other, so as to make the edge of the boat almost level with the water. Yet they see nothing; on their arrival the same night on the shores of Britain, another voice calls the souls by name, and they descend in silence. [i]

Wherever the Land of Fairy has received "a local habitation and a name," one of the old sacred spots of the Celts has been fixed upon; such, for instance, is the far famed "Green Isle of Avalon," the charmed abode of Morgana, where the mighty King Arthur is at this moment reposing in enchanted sleep. "Synadowne," or Snowdon, is distinguished by a castle or palace.

——————— "be nygremauncie
Ymaked of fayrye."—

i Procopius, quoted by Le Roux de Liney. Livre des Legends.

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When Sir Lybeaus Disconus rode into the hall, says the romance—

" Trompes, schalmuses,
He seygh be for the heygh dais
Stonde in his syghte
Amydde the hall flore
A fere starke and store
Was lyght and brende bright,
Nere the door he yede
And ladde yn his stede
That wonte was helpe him yn fyght.

Lybeaus inner 'gan pace
To se ech a place,
The hales in the halle;
Of mayne mor ne lasse
Ne sawe he body ne face
But menstrales yclodeth yn palle,
Wyth harp, fydele, and rote
Orgenes and mery note
Well mery they mayden alle;
With sytole and sawtrye,
So moche melodye
Was never wythinne walle.

Before ech menstrale stod
A torch fayre and good
Brennynge fayre and bright:
Inner more he yode
To wyte with egre mode
Ho sholde wyth him fyght
He yede into the corneres
And loked on the pylers
That selcouth were of syghte;
Of jasper and of fyn crystall,
I wych was pylers and wall
No richer be ne myghte.

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The thores were of brass
The windows were of glas,
Florysseth with ymagerie,
The hall ypaynted was,
No richer never there nas,
That he had seghe with eye."[j]

The far famed forest of Broceliande, in Bretagne, is another such sacred spot. The enchanted "Lady of the Fountain,"[k] with her magic ring, is precisely one of those "Fairies of Romance," who differ so widely in character from the Elves and Fays of the North, and yet

j Libeaus Disconus—(Ritson II.) V. 1760—1800.

k It appears highly probable, that the Castle of Tintagel, in Cornwall, has been made the scene of a slightly altered version of this famous Celtic legend. The story of King Uther Pendragon and the Duchess Igerna (Mort d'Arthur, ch. 1. 2.) presents some curious points of resemblance with that of Syr Yvaine and

"The riche Lady Alundyne,
The Duke's doghter of Landuit."

Dun-dagell is "the impregnable fortress," and the descriptions given of it in the romances are similar in many respects to those of the fairy palace of Avalon: twice every year it became invisible, once at Christmas, and once in the Summer; so that even the natives of the country would not be able to find it, if they had not land-marks to guide them; it was surrounded with meadows, woods, hunting parks, pleasant fountains, and lakes full of fish.—

"Tiltagel esteit un chastel
Ki mult par ert (e) fort e bel.—
Ne cremont asalt, ne engin Ki vaile,
Sur la mer en Cornuaile,
La tur qu'erre fort e (mult) grant.
Jadis la fermèrent j'ant.
De marke sunt tut le quarel
Asis, e vint mult ben e bel.
Eschekerez esteit le mur,
Si cum de sinopre e de azur;
E nez al chastel esteit une porte,
Ele esteit bele e grant e forte,
Ben ferreit le entre e le issue,
Par dous prudumes defendue."
Roman de Tristan. Michel, vol. ii. p. 94.

The Parish of Tintagel comprehends what were once the boroughs of Trebennen—"the woman's town"—and Bosinny—"the bellowing or voice of cattle;"—the Castle itself is remarkable at present as a specimen of Romanesque architecture; and is one of the grandest objects on the North Coast. It should be seen on a rough day, when the sea mist is floating about it, and the waves roaring beneath.

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have gradually been confounded with them: perhaps the fairest mode of shewing what they originally were, will be a brief analysis of one of the most beautiful of the poems in which they figure—"The Lay of Launfal."

The poem opens with a description of the banquets and high festivals which took place at the marriage of King Arthur and the Lady Guenever. No man was allowed to be present "but he were prelat, or baronette;" and on the conclusion of the feast, when the tables were drawn, the Queen presented to the several "Knyghtes" gifts of wonderful beauty and rarity, but to Sir Launfal, who is described as not altogether admiring her character, seeing that she had

—— "lemannys under her lord
So fele there was noon ende."

she gave nothing, not even a "brooch or a ring." Accordingly, "when the bredale was at an end," Sir Launfal departed in high dudgeon from the Court, and journeyed until he came to "Karlyoun,"

"To the meyry's hous of the toun,—
Hys servant that hadde ybe."

here he dwelt

"In a chamber by the orchard side."

for some time, until at last he became so poor that he was unable to attend a

"Feste of greet solemnite
Upon a day of the Trinite,
In Carlyoun was helde."

and he betook himself, for the purpose of driving away the anxieties that oppressed him,

"Unto a fayr forest."—

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" As thus he sat in sorrow and sore,"

he saw emerging from a glade of the wood two damsels of surpassing beauty; their mantels were of green velvet, embroidered with gold, and on their heads were coronets, set

" With sixty gemmys and mo'."

One of them bore a golden basin, and the other a towel of white silk; and approaching the unhappy Knight they saluted him courteously—

" Damesels, he said, God you se!
Syr Knyghte, they sayde, well the be!
Our Lady, Dame Tryamour,
Bad thou schuldest come speke with her
Gyf yt were thy wylle sere,
Wythout more sojour."

They led him, accordingly, to a pavilion in the depth of the forest—

" Wrought, for sooth, Y wys
All of werk of sarsynys,
The pomelles of crystall—
Upon the top an ern ther stod,
Of bourned gold yryche and good
Iflorysched with ryche amall.

Hys eyn wer carbonkeles bryght
As the mone they schon a-nyght
That spreteth out ovyr all—
Alysaunder the conquerour,
Ne Kynge Artour, yn his most honour
Ne hadde noon scwych juell."—

But if the good Knyght marvelled at the beauty of the damosels who had been his conductors, far more was he struck with the exceeding loveliness of the " gentyl may "

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whom he discovered reposing within the pavilion on a "bed of prys," covered with rich clothes of purple.

> Whyt she was as lilye in Maye,
> Or snow that sneweth in wyntery day;
> The rede rose when she is newe
> Agenys her rode is naught of hewe:"

her father was "King of the western faërie," a man of "mikle might," and his court was held in the Isle of Olyroun. When the Lady Tryamour had declared to Sir Launfal how deeply and truly she loved him—for it seems that in those days neither fairies or more mortal dames were very retiring or bashful in such matters—she presented him with a magic purse, "ymad of silk and of gold clere," which, like that of Fortunatus, was never to be emptied, whatever calls might be made on it, but "a mark of gold" always presented itself "as oft as he put the honde therein:" this purse, however, only retained its valuable property as long as Sir Launfal remained true to his fairy mistress; the least exhibition of gallantry towards dames of more earthly mould, and he became poor as he had been before. All that day he remained in the pavilion, and—

> "Mete and drink they hadde afyn,
> Piment, clarè, and Reynysche wyn."

and on parting, Tryamour promised to be with the Knight at a moment's warning whenever he had need of her help, but if he boasted of her favours, at the same moment he lost them. After he had returned to Carlyon and retired to his chamber, there to meditate on the "wonder case" that had befallen him, he was told that messengers awaited him bringing wonderfully rich gifts—"armour and robes, cloth of Ynde," and "white ermyne," and above all, a

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destrier, or war horse, called Blaunchard, "white so any floure." The meyr, at whose house he was staying, when he saw the "nobylnesse" of Sir Launfal, began to repent having treated him with neglect during his previous poverty, and forthwith begged him to attend a stately banquet he was that day to give; but Sir Launfal dismissed him with reproaches, and after arranging his household, he caused proclaim a tournament, which was attended by all the Knights of the Country, and whereat, of course, Sir Launfal proved himself the flower of the tilt yard, and admiration of all comers.

Now so it befel, that a certain Knight of Lombardy, "Syr Valentine he hyghte," having heard of the great fame of Launfal, was stricken with exceeding envy, and despatched in all haste a Squire with a prayer that he would do battle with him "for his lemanne's sake:" such a challenge from such a person was indeed no trifling matter, for it is recorded not only that he, Sir Valentine, was "wonder strong," but "fifteen feet he was longe;" and he made nothing of overthrowing half a dozen Knights, for "pleasure and pastaunce," before breakfast. Sir Launfal, however, accepted the summons with delight, and set out for Lombardy on Blaunchard his good steed, taking with him a Squire from the fairy court, named Gyfre, who was invisible to all but his master. On he rode, till at last he came to the "Cytè of Atalye," where he met Sir Valentine with a great host:—

> "The lists were set
> And the Knights were met."

and with spears in rest they rushed to the encounter. At the first course both their lances were shivered, but in the second, Sir Valentine succeeded in unhelming Launfal,

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who never before had "so moche shame." Gyfre, however, his Squire, was here good at need, for leaping on the horse behind

> "His lorde's helm on he sette
> Fayre and wel adyght:"

and at the third encounter,

> "Sir Valentine he smote so ther
> That hors and man both dead were
> Gronyng with grysly wound."

All the Lords of Atalye were, as might have been expected, greatly enraged at the death of their giant champion, and they swore that Sir Launfal should never pass out of Lombardy in life; but their threats were altogether vain. With a few sweeping blows of his faulchion, Sir Launfal "slew them all" as easily as he would dash off the dew from the grass: and meeting with no further opposition, he returned "with solas and with play," to Britain.

But so it chanced, that in the mean time the mighty King Arthur had heard of the "noblesse of Launfal," and sent a letter desiring him to attend his court at St. John's mass, for that he should be "steward of the hall" on that occasion. Taking leave accordingly of his Lady Tryamour, he set off to Camelot, where, in "merthe and moche honour," he spent forty days amongst Knights and Ladies, "bryght in bour:" but his fall was near, and perhaps in this portion of his marvellous history, we have "the moral of the whole."

After the banquet, on a certain day,

> "Syr Gawain,
> Syr Gyeryes, and Agravain,
> And Syr Launfal also,
> Went to dance upon the green."

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The nature of their performance is unfortunately not stated, but there is great reason for believing that it partook of the character of the Highland reel, a dance which certainly admits of considerable display; however, it chanced that that excellent person, Queen Guenever, concerning whom so much scandal has been circulated, was looking out at the window of her tower, and immediately conceived a violent passion for Sir Launfal, who was leading the dance; and not being at all a person of indolent habits in such matters, she took with her sixty of her maidens, and came down among the Knights: during the pauses of the dance, she found means to have some private conversation with Launfal, and the Knight, irritated by her reproaches, declared that he had

> "Loved a fayryr woman,
> Than thou ever leydest thyn eye upon
> Thys seven yer and mor."

Moreover, that her "lothliest maid" was more worthy to be a queen than the fair Guenever in all her life. Home went the lady in indignant silence, and when King Arthur returned from hunting, she loaded Launfal with reproaches, and told the insult she had received. The King in furious mood sent certain Knights to bring Sir Launfal before him: that mirror of chivalry had retired to his chamber; but the fatal boast had been spoken,—though he called the Lady Tryamour ever so loudly, no signs of her coming appeared—when he put his hand into his magic purse it was empty,—Gyfre had ridden away upon Blaunchard,—and his armour, once blazing in the sunbeams, had now become black and rusted!

After a brief trial and examination of his conduct before the King, it was agreed, that unless within a twelvemonth and a day he brought his leman into the presence of the Knights of King Arthur's court, he should be hanged

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as a thief.[1] Time passed on, and the fatal day arrived, and with it, to all appearances, the death of the bravest Knight in Britain, when suddenly ten maidens "bright of ble," came riding up the street of Camelot: the judgment was delayed in anticipation of what they might bring, and their message was to the king,

> "To bid him make ready hastily
> A fayr chamber for their lady,
> That was come of Kinge's kind."

Not long afterwards, a solitary damsel on a white palfrey "gentyl as bird on bough," was observed coming towards the palace; she was robed in purple pall, and on her head a crown of jewels that dazzled all who looked on them. The trappings of her palfrey were of green velvet bordered with small bells of gold, which made a pleasant music on the wind as she rode on. The poitrel alone was worth an earl's ransom. On her wrist was a ger faulcon, and two white greyhounds with golden collars ran behind. At the first glance Syr Launfal recognised his long lamented mistress, Dame Tryamour; and as she entered into the hall, the Lady Guenever and her maidens no more stood comparison with her passing beauty, than does the moon before the sun: judgment was instantaneously passed in her favour, and going up to the Queen, she blew on her such a breath, that "never more might she see;" at this moment Gyfre appeared with Blaunchard, and Syr Launfal, leaping on his good steed, rode down through Camelot with his fairy bride, and passed—

> —— "to a certain yle
> Olyron that hight."

1 The Queen consenting to this proposition, and moreover adding, that if the Lady should prove fairer than herself, she would not object to the loss of her "eyen grey."

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but though he was thus withdrawn from mortal ken, his steed might be heard to neigh every year at a particular time, and that Knight who would prove his prowess to the utmost, might by repairing thither easily break a lance with that "noble knyght of the tabil ronde," who thus mysteriously was—

"Taken into the faërie."

Such is the universal character of the Fairies of Romance; they are in fact merely women endowed with supernatural power: they figure extensively in the histories of Arthur and of Amadis—

——— "met in forests wide
By Knights of Logres or of Lyones—
Lancelot, or Pelleas, or Pellinore."

and there is every reason to believe that the priestesses of the Gothic and Celtic races have furnished one important element in their character: the "Fola" of the Northern nations need hardly be mentioned; but the Senæ or Gallicenæ of the Celts are less known. "Sena,"[m] says Pomponius Mela, "is situated in the British sea, over against the land of the Osismii, and is famous for the oracle of a Gaulish deity, whose priestesses, devoted to perpetual virginity, are said to be nine in number; they are called Gallicenæ, supposed to be of great genius and rare endowments, capable of raising storms by their incantations, of transforming themselves into what animals they please, and able to foretell what is to come." Although in this extract the Senæ are said to be the inhabitants of one particular island, yet there is evidence that a "Caer Sëon,"[n] as it is called in the

m P. Mela. de Situ Orbis I. c. 65.
u Davies' Mythology and Rites of the British Druids.

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Bardic poems, was attached to almost every Celtic tribe. Such were the Isles des Saintes on the west coast of Brittany, and Isles Bourne et du Croissée at the mouth of the Loire; such too the Isle of Oleron seems to have been, and some of the Western Hebrides, and especially the Isle of Anglesea, were in all probability occupied in a similar manner; for the "women like furies with torches and dishevelled hair," mentioned by Tacitus, are most reasonably explained as having been Gallicenæ: traces of them existed in various forms, late down into the middle ages, principally in Brittany and Wales: the—"Evangiles des Connoilles, or Maxims of the Distaff," were constantly rehearsed in the halls of certain Breton castles by eight spinsters, who, whilst they spun or worked embroidery, told romances of the times when the cows were as high as the hills, and were milked into a pond. The eldest had an elevated seat, and began the maxims of wisdom. 1. If on a journey you meet a hare, avert the omen by turning back three times. 2. The dice player, anxious to win, must not sit with his back to the moon. 3. Clean sheets on a bed bring down the Angel of God, who remains until the occupant have evil thoughts. 4. Magpies chattering on the roof forbode evil; swallows twittering cause no harm. 5. Carry thy sowing seed in the tablecloth used on Christmas-day, and birds will not pick it out of the ground: plant crosses among the grain, and hail will not beat it down. 6. Suffer not an ox to be illtreated, for an ox was witness to the birth of Christ. 7. Buy no bees, for their honey will be bitter; obtain them by exchange: swear not near a beehive, for the bees will issue forth and sting thee: marry a child of thine, then give the bees a wedding feast with red cloth on the hives and flowers before them: if a person should die, and particularly the head of the family, cover thy bees with mourning cloth and tell them thy

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loss, for if either be neglected they will swarm abroad. 8. Cause thy housewomen to let their fowls touch the pot-hanger of the hearth, and they will not quit the farm. 9. He who hath intrigued with his neighbour's wife hath closed the gates of heaven, and his knocking will not be heeded, unless the woman whom he hath deluded obtain the permission of St. Peter, open the door, and say, "I pardon you." 10. If bats wheel round the roof of a house depart from it, for an evil one will set it on fire. 11. If a spider fall on thy clothes let it depart unhurt; that day thou wilt not be unhappy. 12. The howling of dogs portends evil, stop thine ears; but the neighing of horses portends joy. 13. If there be a singing in thy right ear, hope for good; if in the left, fear some evil. 14. If thy children have measles, wash them with holy water, and to-morrow they will be healed. 15. She whose distaff is not spun off on Saturday night will find her spinning will not bleach.

The Valkyriæ, Nornæ and Mairæ of the North, have also contributed not a little to the formation of the Fairy of Romance; the part played by these latter at the birth of those whom "they delighted to honour," is evidently from this source. But the most remarkable transfer of the attributes of ancient goddess to the fairy, occurs in that extraordinary being, the Lady Hera or Holda—Hecate or Benzoria—the Mother or Queen Witch; the Gyre Carline of the Scotch.

John Herold, a German friar of the fifteenth century, in one of his sermons, exclaims against those "qui Deam, quam quidam Dianam nominant, dicunt cum suo exercitu ambulare;" he states this practice to have taken place at Christmas. Douce imagines that Herodias being the name of Herod's wife, the common people had converted her into a witch from their abhorrence of her cruelty towards John

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the Baptist; and that the circumstance of her daughter's dancing, combined with the predilection of witches for this amusement, might contribute to the idea.[o] Schilter thinks Herodias was the same as Juno; he quotes Gobelinus Persona, a monk of Paderborn in the fifteenth century, who, in his general history of the world, had asserted that the Saxons worshipped Juno under the Greek name of Hera, and that the common people still believed in the flight of Hera through the air at the time of Christmas; a superstition which seems derived from an older notion, that Juno presided over that element. Professor Finn Magnussen, in his Lexicon to the Edda, supposes the mysterious matron Guro, who wears a long tail as an ornament, and who accompanies the Wutund-heer, or wild army of Odin, to be the same as the Gyre Carline. The Valkyriæ, it must be remembered, accompanied the Einheriar, or spirits of the

o She certainly was popularly regarded as a remarkable personage. The excellent Patrick Walker, in his "Vindication of Mr. Cameron's name," after condemning the practice of "too many professors," that of dancing to "carnal, vain springs," proceeds. "It had been good for that unhappy lass who danced off the head of John the Baptist, that she had been born a cripple, and never drawn a limb to her: historians say, that her sin was written upon her judgment; who sometime thereafter was dancing upon the ice, and it broke, and snapt the head off her; her head danced above and her feet beneath."—Biographia Presbyteriana, vol. i. p. 210.

As to the dancing of witches, perhaps the following is one of the most amusing notices to be met with:—

Item, the sayde Agnes Sampson was after brought againe before the Kinge's majestie, and confessed that she, with a great many other witches, went to sea, each one in a riddle or cive, and went in the same verie substantiallie, with flaggons of wine, making merrie and drinkynge by the way, in the same riddles or cives, to the kirk of North Barrick, in Lowthian, and that after they had landed, tooke handes on the lande, and daunced this reille or shorte daunce, singing all with one voice:—

Commer, goe ye before, commer goe ye—
Gif ye wil not goe before, commer, let me—

At which time she confessed that this Geillis Duncane did goe before them, playing this reille or daunce upon a small trompe, called a Jewe's trumpe, untill they entred into the kirke of North Barrick.

This confession made the Kynge in a wonderful admiration, and sent for the said Geillis Duncane, who, upon the like trumpe, did play the said daunce before the Kinge's majestie, who, in respect of the strangeness of these matters, tooke greate delight to be present at their examinations.—Newes from Scotland, quoted by Kirkpatrick Sharpe; Preface to Law's Memorialls.

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heroes, when they passed through the silver gate of Valhalla to enjoy the pleasures of the chase; and the belief that an aerial host, known under various appellations, hunted in shadowy forms at close of day, is spread throughout Europe. The children of Hellequin, or as they are called by Peter Blessensis, the "Familia Hellequinii," haunted the forests of Brittany: no one might call to them as they swept by, for if one says, "I join in the hunt," blood will rain, and pieces of human dead bodies will drop down that have been torn from the grave by the witch Harpine.[p] In Navarre, huntsmen are seen pursuing the shadowy form of a boar, but only through the grey mist which hangs round the summits of the mountains; and on our own Dartmoor, the deep baying of the heath hounds with fiery tails and flaming eyes is not only heard in the wild hollows and rocky glens, but they occasionally enter houses in the dead of night for the sake of devouring sleeping children. Such a "companye" always accompanied the Fairies in

p The superstition is alluded to in a magnificent passage of the old Scottish poem of Albania—

"'Ere since, of old, the haughty Thanes of Ross,
So to the simple swain tradition tells,
Were wont, with clans and ready vassals thronged,
To wake the bounding stag or guilty wolf.
There oft is heard, at midnight or at noon,
Beginning faint, but rising still more loud
And nearer, voice of hunters, and of hounds
And horns, hoarse winded, blowing far and keen;—
Forthwith the hubbub multiplies—the gale
Labours with wilder shrieks and rifer din
Of hot pursuit; the broken cry of deer
Mangled by throttling dogs—the shouts of men
And hoofs thick beating on the hollow hill.
Sudden the grazing heifer in the vale
Starts at the noise—and both the herdsman's ears
Tingle with inward dread. Aghast, he eyes
The mountain's height, and all the ridges round,
Yet not one trace of living wight discerns
Nor knows—o'erawed and trembling as he stands;
To what or whom he owes his idle fear
To ghost, to witch, to fairy, or to fiend.
But wonders—and no end of wondering finds."

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their visits to "middle earth." Bessie Dunlop heard them sweep into Restalrig Loch, near Edinburgh, with "a hideous rumbling sound," and the Peris of Affganistan pass with a "sound as of withered leaves."[q] Such too is the midnight camp which might sometimes be seen surrounding the walls of Prague,

"With ghastly faces thronged, and fiery arms."

but which vanished on the repetition of the magical words, "Vezelè! Vezelè! ho! ho! ho!"[r]

The most remarkable connexion, however, between Odin's wild army and the Queen Witch, is to be traced in Dame Abunde, or Habundia. She exhibits different characteristics from the preceding beings, and is the genuine and antique Queen of Faërie, bestowing happiness and abundance. In the passage before quoted from Gobelinus Persona, Hera is spoken of as conferring temporal abundance; and in an ancient fabliau by Haisiau, Dame Abunde is thus introduced:—

"Ceste richesse nus abonde—
Nos l'avon de, par Dame Avonde."

Kemble, in the learned preface to his edition of Beowulf, shews a connexion between this name, and an appellation of Odin, whose army she constantly led—"*Gauts*—Geat," the *pouring, abundance* giving God:[s] and the confusion marked by Price in the Essay prefixed to Warton's History of English Poetry,[t] between the Elf Queen, (Persephone,) and the Queen of Faërie, (Artemis,) is certainly to be found here as well, for we see the same being under various forms; evil, as Benzoria and Hecate; good, as

q Conolly, vol. ii. r Sir Walter Scott, Border Minstrelsy, vol. ii. p. 276.
s Kemble's Beowulf, vol. ii. p. 21, 22. t Price's Warton, Editor's Preface, p. xlviii.

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Abunde. Habonde is associated by Delrio with the good ladies for whom all kinds of victual were provided, and left uncovered. In the life of Germain, Bishop of Auxerre, is the following "Narratio:"—"In a tyme he was herboured in a place where men made redy the borde, for to go to dyner after he had soupid: and he wes gretli merveiled, and asked for whom the borde was set again? and thei seide, 'for the gode women that walke by night;' and then Seynt Germayne ordeyned that night to be waked—and then, at a certayne hour, gret multitude of feendis come to the borde in likeness of men and women; and then Germayne commanded hem, that thei shulde not passe thens—and then he awoke all the menne, and asked yf they knew anye of thos persons, and thei sayde that thei were their neygeboures—and then he sente to their houses, and thei were all founde in bed—and then thei all had grete mervayle—and thought wel that they were feendis that had so long scorned them."

Thus much for what may fairly be called the debris of the old religious systems of Northern and Western Europe. It would be easy to trace to a much greater extent the existence of ceremonies and ideas connected with these systems, and lingering far down into the middle ages; we must now, however, proceed to examine a class of beings whose mythology can hardly be called a debris, for there are proofs that it existed from the very earliest ages; and it is even in all probability anterior to the dominant cycles of mythology: the class to which I allude are those spirits of the woods, mountains, and rivers, which, under various forms, are spread through all countries, and amongst tribes the most diversified in manners and origin.

The tendency to confer a spiritual character on every object of the material world, is one of the strongest characteristics of nations in the infancy of civilization: man,

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it has been well observed, then regards himself rather as the highest link in the chain of created life, than as altogether separate from the inanimate forms around him,—hence he has thrown around those forms a degree of mysterious interest, and endowed them with a spiritual life, the characteristics of which are universally derived from the external and visible nature of the object so spiritualized; hence all that host of water and wood spirits which were believed to throng the "dim aisles" of the forest, or to have their abodes in the remote mountain tarns and dark waters: the wild women of Germany—the shapes and forms of wondrous beauty seen by St. Brandan and his monks when they went in search of paradise—the Nymphs and Naiads of Greece—the Peris of Persia, and the Apsaras of India; they were all the result of the same process of the mind, and the origin of their variations is to be sought in the peculiar character of the country in which they are found. It would be easy to trace this connexion between spirit and matter throughout the various tribes of the "wild fée." Amidst the melancholy grandeur of the deep glens and ravines of the Highlands, these spirits assume a dark and fearful form; and the strange shapes called Ourisk which haunt the recesses of the hills, half man and half beast, are the result of the influence on the human mind of the country over which they were supposed to wander. In the valley of the Jura and the old woods of Burgundy, dwell the Vuire, beings of incomparable beauty, who see by means of a diamond placed in the middle of their forehead: it sometimes falls out while washing their faces in fountains, and he who finds a Vuire diamond is sure to become rich. In the forests of Dauphinè, according to Gervase of Tilbury, is a certain castle, called the house of the Vuire, where, before sunrise and after sunset, the traveller could see these spirits at the windows, but when the

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castle was approached, vases of flowers alone were visible. The Rusalkis of Russia belong to the same family: they are a race of beautiful virgins, with long green hair, living in lakes and rivers, and generally seen swinging on the branches of trees, bathing in the flood, or dressing their hair beside a running stream. "Wodnyk," again, is the river spirit of Bohemia; he is believed to come out of the water at midday, to sun himself in old willow trees, and hang his green garments to dry on the white hawthorn. Heywood, in his "Hierarchie of Blessed Angels," says, that "when Julius Cæsar with his army was to pass the river Rubicon, to come into Italy and to meet with Pompey, one of the waterie spirits in the shape of a man, but greater than ordinarie, sate piping on the bank of the river; which one of Cæsar's soldiers seeing, snatched away his pipe and broke it; when the spirit presently swimming the river, being on the other side, sounded a shrill and terrible blast from a trumpet, which Cæsar interpreted to be a good and happy omen of his succeeding victorie." [u] These water spirits are expressly declared by Heywood to be connected with the Fairies.

"Spirits that have o'er water government
Are to mankind alike malevolent;
They trouble seas, lakes, rivers, brooks and wels,
Meres, lakes, and love to inhabit watry cels,—
Hence noisome and pestiferous vapours raise;
Besides, they men encounter divers ways.
At wrecks some present are—another sort
Ready to cramp their joints that swim for sport.
One kind of these th' Italians 'fatæ' name—
'Fée' the French—we sybyls—and the same
Others, 'white nymphs,' and those that have them seen
'Night ladies' some—of which Habundia Queen."

u Heywood, p. 550, from Sabellicus.

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In the Western Hebrides, the Shetlands and Orkneys, as might naturally have been expected, the belief of the inhabitants eminently assumes this aquatic character. The "Sea Trows" of the Shetlands inhabit a region of their own at the bottom of the sea; when they visit the upper world on occasions of business or curiosity, they are obliged to enter the skin of some animal capable of respiring in the water. Their most favourite vehicle is the skin of the larger seal or haaf fish; for as this animal is amphibious, they can land on some rock and there cast off their sea dress, and assume their own shape, and amuse themselves as they will in the upper world; they must, however, take especial care of their skins, as each has but one, and if that should be lost the owner can never re-descend, but must become an inhabitant of the supra-marine world.[v]

The old Scandinavian Vikingr again, when the storm swept over the "hazy sea," beheld strange and fearful forms following the vessel's track. The Nicors rose from the watery depths to pursue and combat with the "dark riders of the wave." When Beowulf went in search of the abode of the Grendel's Mother, he came to a black lake full of snakes and sea-dragons; storm scathed pines were scattered here and there, and on the rocks many Nicors were lying.[w] One of the names of Odin was Nikar or Hnickar, and under it he acts as the destroying or evil principle. There is a gloomy lake on the Island of Rugen; its waters are turbid, and its shores covered with thick woods; this he loves to haunt, and places the boats of the fishermen on the summits of the loftiest pine trees: the Teutonic Nixes are his offspring; of whom none are more celebrated than the Nymphs of the Elbe and the Saal. In the days of Paganism, the Saxons, who dwelt between

v Keightley, i. 265, from Hibbert's Shetlands.

w Beowulf, vol. ii. p. 58.

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these rivers, worshipped a female deity, whose temple was situated in the town of Magdeburgh, or Meydeburch, "the Maiden's Castle," and who in after times continued to be feared as Nymph of the Elbe: often did she appear at Magdeburgh, where she was wont to come to market with her basket hanging on her arm; she was gentle in her manners, and neat in her dress, and nothing differing in appearance from a burgher's daughter; yet one corner of her snow white apron appeared constantly wet, in token of her aquatic nature.[x]

These Nymphs are evidently enough connected with the Celtic Oi-Marra, or Mermaid; although an ancient man in the Isle of Eigg told me that "there were none on that coast:" they nevertheless abound in the more southern islands. Waldron gives us the history of a person who descended in a diving bell at least double the number of leagues that the moon is distant from the earth; his account when drawn up was wonderful. "After," said he, "I had passed the region of fishes, I descended into a pure element, clear as the air in the serenest and most unclouded day, through which, as I passed, I saw the bottom of the watery world, paved with coral and a shining kind of pebbles, which glittered like the sunbeams reflected on a glass; I longed to tread the delightful paths, and never felt more exquisite delight than when the machine I was enclosed in grazed upon it. On looking through the little windows of my prison I saw large streets and squares on every side, ornamented with huge pyramids of chrystal, not inferior in brightness to the finest diamonds; and the most beautiful building, not of stone nor brick, but of mother-of-pearl, and embossed in various figures with shells of all colours. The passage which led to one of these magnificent

x Sir Francis Palgrave.

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apartments being open, I endeavoured with my whole strength to move my enclosure towards it, which I did, though with great difficulty, and very slowly. At last, however, I got entrance into a very spacious room, in the midst of which stood a large amber table, with several chairs round of the same. The floor of it was composed of rough diamonds, emeralds, rubies and pearls. Here I doubted not but to make my voyage as profitable as it was pleasant; for could I have brought with me but a few of these, they would have been of more value than all we could hope for in a thousand wrecks: but they were so closely wedged in, and so strongly cemented by time, that they were not to be unfastened. I saw several chains, carcanets, and rings of all manner of precious stones finely cut, and set after our manner; which I suppose had been the prize of the winds and waves: these were hanging loosely on the jasper walls, by strings made of rushes, which I might easily have taken down; but as I had edged myself within half a foot reach of them, I was unfortunately drawn back through your want of line. In my return I saw several comely mermen and beautiful mermaids, the inhabitants of this blissful realm, swiftly descending towards it, but they seemed frighted at my appearance, and glided at a distance from me, taking me, no doubt, for some monstrous and new created species." [y]

But nowhere are the mysterious powers of nature more distinctly symbolized than in the Elves of Northern Europe. They figure in the Scandinavian Mythology under various forms—as Duergar, or Dwarfs—Vættr, or Genii—Alfen—

y Waldron's History of the Isle of Man—"Par Sainte Marie," exclaimed a certain Knight on seeing a "seraine de mer,"—"si belle creature ne vis je oncque en ma vie!" There would seem to be divers species of the Syren, for one figured in Michaelis' notes to Gafarelli, Curiositates Inauditæ—is certainly not remarkable for beauty. There is a Triton standing by, in a pensive attitude, robed very gorgeously in fish scales.

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and Trollfolk. "After the earth had been formed of the body of Ymer the Giant," says the Voluspa, "the Dwarfs sprung from it."—

"Then went the Gods
To their high raised-up seats,
The high and holy
Then consulted
Who 'twas should
Form the Dwarfs
From the Sea Giant's blood
And blue bones.
Then Modsogner is
The chiefest become
Of all the Dwarfs,
But Durin the second—
Many they made
To man like,
Dwarfs on the earth."[z]

The Norwegians ascribe the regularity and polish of rock chrystal to the diligence of the Dwarfs, and their voice is heard in the Dvergamal, or mountain echo. I shall not attempt at present to enter into any thing like an explanation of the universal characteristic of the various tribes of Elves, viz. their diminutive stature. It is one of the most curious, as well as the most obscure points in their mythology, and to be at all satisfactory can only be discussed at considerable length. It appears probable, however, that in process of time the attribute has been extended to many tribes of beings originally of fair stature and proportion. The Elves of the Edda are divided into two classes, the light and dark Elves; the first dwelling in the highest of the nine worlds, and scarcely noticed; the second being subterra-

z Volo-spa. str. ix. x. The meaning of the word "Módsogner," is "vigorem sugens," or "succum attrahens:" he is considered by Professor Finn Magnussen as a personification of the mineral and vegetative powers of the earth.

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nean, and of a malevolent nature: but the more modern belief has been modified and added to from various quarters. The Norwegians call them Huldrafolk, and their music Huldraslaat: it is in the minor key, and of a dull and mournful sound.[a] According to Thiele, dirt and noise distress them beyond measure. A colony of Elves in Odensee had taken up their abode under the floor of a cow-house, and were so annoyed at the filth of the cattle, that they gave the dairy-maid to understand, that if she did not remove the cows she would have reason to repent it; she gave little heed to their representations, and it was not very long till they set the maid up on the top of the hay-rick and killed all the cows. It is said that they were seen on the same night removing in a great hurry from the cow-house down to the meadow, and that they went in little coaches, and their king was in the first coach, which was far more stately and magnificent than the rest. The Danish peasantry assert that the Elle people live in the Elle moors. The appearance of the man is that of an old man with a low crowned hat on his head: the Elle woman is young, and of a fair and attractive countenance, but behind she is hollow like a dough-trough. Young men should especially be on their guard against her, for it is very difficult to resist her; and she has moreover a stringed instrument, which, when she plays on it, quite ravishes their hearts. The Elves are connected in some curious manner with trees; sometimes make an interchange of form with them. In the wood of Rugaard in Zealand is a tree which by night becomes a whole Elle people, and goes about all alive. It has no leaves upon it, yet it would

a Thyræus, in his quarto on places haunted, says of this music, "that although travellers, herdsmen and shepherds are much delighted with it, it is nevertheless a vanity—'vox et præterea nihil.'" The learned Lavaterus inclines to think it similar to the extraordinary sights, bright lights, and sound of cymbals, seen occasionally on Mount Atlas.—Thyræus de Locis Infestis, Part I. ch. 20. Lavaterus de Spectris, ch. 19.

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be very unsafe to go to break or fell it, for the underground people frequently hold their meetings under its branches. There is in another place an elder tree growing in a farm-yard which frequently takes a walk in the twilight about the yard, and peeps in through the window at the children when they are alone. It was perhaps these elder trees that gave origin to the notion. In Danish *Hyld*, or *Hyl*, a word not far removed from *Elle*, is *Elder*—and there is a belief that in or under the Elder tree dwells a being called Hyldemoer, Elder mother, or Hyldequinde, Elder woman, with her attendant sprites. A Danish peasant if he wanted to take any part of an elder tree, used previously to say three times, "O Hyldemoer! Hyldemoer! let me take some of thy elder, and I will let thee take something of mine in return!" If this was omitted he would be severely punished. It is moreover not prudent to have any furniture made of elder wood. A child was once put to lie in a cradle made of this wood, but Hyldemoer came and pulled it by the legs, and gave it no rest till it was put to sleep elsewhere. [b]

Amongst the earliest notices of the old English Elf, is a remarkable history of William of Newbridge, who suddenly puts a stop to his learned disquisitions on Hugo of Durham and William of York, in order to indite a chapter "De quibusdam viridibus pueris." Near St. Edmondsbury, in the time of harvest, the reapers suddenly perceived emerging from certain old fosses called "wolf-pits," two children, a boy and a girl, green all over, and dressed in garments of an unknown fabric. Whether they were mortal beings or not—

"That ne might any living wight descry."

b Keightley's Fairy Mythology. Borrow's Danish Ballads, 139.

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but they certainly differed in some most important respects from men of human mould, for they would eat nothing but beans, and those raw. After a time they were both baptized, but the boy immediately died: the girl lived for many years afterwards, and said that their own country was called the "Land of St. Martin; that there was no sun there, but constant twilight; and, most miraculous of all, that it was a Christian Land, and had Churches." [c]

Connected with the dark Elves are those "Robinettes," who delighted in leading astray travellers at night, and tormenting them in various remarkable fashions. Will-of-the-wisp is the peculiar property of these beings, and they are said to extinguish this light at the least noise. In Germany the peasants believe that Will is of a fiery temper and easily excited, and they have a mocking verse which angers him much when he hears it. In the Highlands, the tombs of Chieftains are marked by the Ignis Fatuus resting upon them; [d] and I need not notice how the rose-carved buttresses and pinnacles of Roslin seem all on fire—

> "—— when death is nigh,
> The lordly line of high St. Clair."

The Hudekin, Rubezahl, and Friar Rush, of Denmark, Germany, and Silesia, are all notable for their mischievous propensities, and of this nature is the working Goblin, the "Lubber Fiend" of Milton, and the Pixies of Devonshire. These last have different attributes in different districts of the county; but the genuine Pixy is easily known, for he never appears but as a shapeless bundle of rags. A woman on the northern border of Dartmoor was return-

c Gulliel. Nieubridg. lib. i. c. xxvii.—Roberts, Popular Antiquities, and the Author of "Britannia after the Romans," conceive the story to relate to the "secret orgies of the 'virides Britanni,' and the mysteries of Manogan and Brittan."

d Logan, vol. ii. 342.

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ing home late on a dark evening, accompanied by two children, and carrying a third in her arms, when, on arriving at her own door, she found one missing: her neighbours with lanthornes immediately set out in quest of the lost child, whom they found sitting under a large oak tree, famous of old as a favourite pixy haunt: he declared that he had been led away by two large bundles of rags, which had remained with him until the lights appeared, when they immediately vanished. Near the centre of Dartmoor, too, is an antique granite erection over a well,

> "Where water clear as diamond spark
> In a stone basin falls,"

said to have been placed there by Sir John Fitze, who, once riding over the Moor with his Lady, was Pixy led, and accidentally coming to this spring, in gratitude for the benefit received from its cool waters, erected over it the structure which yet remains, bearing date 1568.

In being constantly clothed in rags, the Pixies resemble certain beings mentioned by Gervase of Tilbury, called Neptunes in France, and Portunes in England—and described as "diminutive, old, and wrinkled beings, clothed in patches." They are similar also to the Barstuccæ and Kaukies of Samogitia—little bearded creatures, a span high, sometimes becoming visible—and "ane little creature, the bowman's bairne," in Shetland, is apparently of the same family.

The division of the Elvish tribes, already noticed, is found also to obtain in the more recent systems of Demonology, strictly so called. Michael Psellus, in his Treatise, "De Operâ Dæmonûm," which is remarkable as being the earliest existing on the subject, divides the race of evil

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Spirits into—1. The Fiery; 2. The Aërial; 3. The Terrestrial; 4. The Watery; 5. The Subterranean; and 6. The Light-hating; which last we are told are scarcely endowed with sense. All these beings are opposed to every thing good, and torment mankind in divers fashions; but the Watery, the Subterranean, and Light-hating are by far the most to be dreaded, for they do not alarm by Illusions or Phantasms, but like ferocious beasts assail the human race,[e] by leaping on them and hastening their destruction. The Subterranean swarm in mines, so that there was a peculiar meaning in the prayer inserted in many ancient Liturgies, for those who laboured "in metallis."[f] Lavaterus describes a singular mountain or mine demon who inhabited a silver mine in the Rhetian Alps; his appearance was that of an ordinary workman, and he was constantly to be seen busy at work, more particularly on Fridays. The captain of the mine had never been injured by him, for before descending he had always taken due care to fortify himself with the sign of the Cross. It so happened, however, that on one occasion the Spirit in the mine being exceedingly troublesome, he ordered him, "abire in malam rem, additis diris execrationibus," whereupon, dreadful to relate, the evil being seized the captain by the head and twisted it round, so that he was compelled to move crab fashion, the hind part being advanced in front; the veracious history furthermore reporteth that the unhappy man lived sometime afterwards a lasting witness of the mine demon's power.[g]

The Spirits of the Air,[h] according to Heywood, swarm

e Μιχαηλου του ψελλου—περι ενεργειας δαιμονων. pp. 45, 46.

f In the mine of the Crown of Roses was a virulent demon, called Anabergius, occasionally visible, in the dress of a monk, who breathed fire on those who spoke to him: he once killed in this manner twenty men. It is not impossible that Sir Humphrey Davy's safety lamp may have exorcised this evil spirit.

g Lavaterus de Spectris, Part 1. ch. xvi.

h Heywood—Hierarchie of Blessed Angels, p. 546.

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in the Syrtes of Lybia, where they are oftentimes visible, in the shape of "divers birds and beasts, some moving, some without motion; some running, some flying, others in other strange postures; but, which is most miraculous, sometimes they will come behind men as they are travelling, leape up and sit upon their shoulders; who may feele them to be much colder than either snow or ice." In the Council of Basill, too, (I use the words of the same learned author,) "certaine learned men taking their journey through a forest, one of these spirits, in the shape of a Nightingale, uttered such melodious tones and accents, that they were all amazed, and stayed their steps to sit down and hear it. At length, one of them apprehending that it was not possible that such rarity of music could be in a bird, the like of which he had never heard, demanded of it in the name of God who or what it was. The bird presently answered, 'I am the soul of one that is damned, and am enjoined to sing thus till the last day of the Great Judgment,' which said, with a terrible shriek that amazed them all, she flew away and soon vanished. The event was, that all who heard those syrenical notes, presently fell into grievous sicknesses, and soon after died."

These Spirits too were

> "The calling shapes and beckoning phantoms dire,
> The airy tongues that syllabled men's names
> On sands and shores, and desert wildernesses."

an aërial spirit called to Bishop Bruno, as he was sailing on the Danube, "Ho! ho! Bishop Bruno! whither art thou travelling? but dispose of thyself how thou pleasest, thou shalt be my prey and spoil:" shortly afterwards, as the Bishop was at a grand festival in the Castle of Esburch, a rafter fell from the roof striking him dead on the spot. But by far the most remarkable peculiarity of the Hosts

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of the Air, was the exhibition of "vast assemblies moving to and fro" before battles or other great events. There is an extraordinary passage in Davila's Civil Wars of France, wherein he records, before the battle of Ivry; "A prodigious apparition in the midst of the sky—for there were seen two wonderful great armies of a red bloody colour which rushed visibly together in the air, amidst the horrible noise of thunder:" and during our own Great Rebellion, such appearances are frequently recorded. Sometime previous to the breaking out of the troubles, the Tewkesbury Carrier, passing over the Cotswold hills with his men and pack-horses, a little before the dawn of day, "saw most sensibly and very perspicuously in the air, musketeers, harnessed men and horsemen, moving in battle array, and assaulting one another in divers furious postures." Similar appearances were said to have been noticed with respect to the fight at Edge-hill; an account of which is contained in a pamphlet, entitled "A great Wonder in Heaven—shewing the late apparitions and prodigious noises of war and battles seen on Edge-hill, near Keinton, in Northamptonshire; certified under the hands of William Wood, Esq. and Justice of Peace in the saide County, Samuel Marshall, preacher of God's Word in Keinton, and other persons of quality, 1640." It is more than possible, that the recent reports of such appearances suggested the lines of the Paradise Lost—

> "As when to warn proud cities, war appears
> Waged in the troubled sky, and armies rush
> To battle in the clouds—before each van
> Prick forth the airy knights—and couch their spears
> Till thickest legions close—with feats of arms
> From either end of heaven the welkin burns."[1]

1 Par. Lost, book ii. line 533 et seq.—vide Howell's Familiar Letters—and the Bibliotheca Gloucestrencis.

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But the finest and most powerful description is from the pen of him who is peculiarly the "Voice of the Antique Age." Froissart, in one of the pictured passages which make his Chronicles resemble those grim and quaint pieces of tapestry work wherein our ancestors delighted, sets before us, with all the power of an eye-witness, the strange and solemn portents which preceded the fight of Rosebecque. "Thus passed the nyght in the hoost with Philyppe Dartuell; but about midnyght, as I was enfourmed, there fell in their hoost a maruaylous thynge, I neuer harde of none lyke it in any maner.

Thus whañe the Flemynges were at rest in their lodginges, howbeit, they knewe well their enemyes were on the hyll, nat past a leage fro them, as I was enfourmed, Philyp Dartuell had brought a damosell with him out of Gaunt; and as Philyppe lay and slept on a couch, besyde a lytell fyre of coles, in a pauilyon, this sayd damosell about ye houre of mydnight issued out of the pauilyon to loke out on ye ayre, and to se what tyme of the night it was by liklyhode, for she coulde nat slepe; she loked towarde Rosebeque, and she sawe in the skye dyuers fumes and fyre flyeing, it was of the fyres that the Frenchmen made vnder hedges and busshes; this damosell harkened, and as she thought, she harde great brute bytwene their hoost and the French hoost: she thought she harde the Frenche cryes, cryeing moũtioy, Saynt Denyce, and other cryes, and this she thought was on mount Dorre, bytwene them and Rosebeque: of this thyng she was sore afrayed, and so entred into the pauylyon, and sodenly awaked Philyp, and sayd, Sir, ryse vp shortly and arme you, for I haue harde a great noyse on the mount Dorre, I beleue it be the Frenchmen that are comyng to assayle you. With those wordes he rose and cast on a gowne and toke his axe in his hande, and yssued out of the pauylion to se what it was; and as the

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damosell had shewed hym, he herde the same hymselfe, and it semed to hym that there was a great tournement on the sayd hill; than incōtynent he entred into his pauilyon, and caused his trumpet to be blowen. As soone as the trumpet had blowen, euery man arose and armed them. They of the watche sent incōtynent to Philyppe Dartuell to knowe for what cause he styrred vp the host, seying there was no cause why, shewyng him howe they had sent to their enemyes hoost, and there was no styrring; 'Why,' quod Philyppe, 'wherof rose that noyse on the mount Dorre? 'Sir,' quoth they, 'we herde the same noyse, and sent thyder to knowe what it was, and they that went hath made report, y^{t} when they came there, they herde nor saw nothyng, and, Sir, bycause we founde nothynge, we made no noyse therof for styrring vp of your hoost; if we shulde haue styrred them without a cause, we ought to haue ben blamed for our labour.' And whan they of the watche had shewed Philyppe these wordes, he apeased hymselfe and all the hoost; howbeit, he had marveyle in his mynde what it myghte be: some sayde it was fendes of hell, that played and tourneyed there as the batayle shulde be the next daye, for ioye of the great pray that they were likely to have ther."[j]

The airy demons occasionally exhibited long processions of lights and torches, similar to those of the Church.[k] They could assume any shape but those of the lamb and dove; but their most favourite were flies, bees, or wasps. When Christian Shaw of Bargarran was lying under the power of the Evil One, she once lamentably and suddenly

j Lord Berners' Froissart: vol. i. ch. 419.

k "The Admirable Historie of the Possession and Conversion of a Woman, &c. &c." p. 332. "About nine of the clock at night, the Fathers, with certain women there present, did see in the aire great store of torches, and candles, burning very bright, and caryed in maner of procession towards Marseille."

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cried out, "The Bee hath stinged me!"[l] although no one could perceive any visible insect.[m] The great King of the Demons appeared in various shapes; sometimes in white raiment, sometimes in a black gown, and at the Sabbats or meetings of the witches, he "struck maist vigorously with ane baton" those who infringed their appointments. Sir J. Melville describes him as thus appearing in the pulpit of North Berwick Kirk—"Hys body was like yrn, as they thought that handled him, his faice was terrible, hys nose lyk the bek of an egle, gret bournyng eyn; hys handis and leggis were herry, with clawis upon his handis, and feet lyk the gryffin;[n] and spak with a *how* voice." Remigius says the voice of demons is like speaking into an empty cask. Lilly thinks angels speak Earse: "When they so speak," says he, "it is like the Irish, much in the throat:" but Sprenger, perplexed on the subject, conceives that "an angel occupied the body

l Sadducismus Debellatus, "A true Narrative of the Sorceries and Witchcrafts exercised by the Devil and his Instruments upon Mrs. Christian Shaw." London, 1698.

m Each witch had a demon of this class to wait on her—some appearing in sad dun, some in grass green, some in sea green, some in yellow. They are described as little humpbacked creatures, speaking "goustie-like," they seldom, however, assumed this human shape. Joan Willimot had "two spirits, one in the likeness of a kittin, the other of a moldiwarp." Jane Hott had "a thing like a hedgehog but soft as a cat." Joanna Cooper had "three familiars, two like mouses, called Jacke and Prickeare, and the third like a frog called Frog."—Prodigious and Tragicall Historie of the Six Witches at Maidstone, reprint 1838.

See Scheffer for an account of the familiar spirits of the Laps, called *Gans*. "An inhabitant of Helieland, who is still alive, going towards the mountains in Norway to hunt bears, came to a cave under the side of a hill, where he found an image rudely shapen, which was the Idol of some Finlander; near this stood a Ganeska, or magical satchel: he opened this, and found in it several blueish flies crawling about, which they called Gans or Spirits, and are daily sent out by the Finlanders to execute their devilish designs."—History of Lapland, p. 59.

n Birds' feet constantly recur in these descriptions; Storjunkare, a god of the Lapps, generally appears "to fowlers or fishers in the shape of a tall personable man, habited like a nobleman, with a gun in his hand, and his feet like those of a bird."—Scheffer, p. 38.

In Bohemia is a valley where "divers nights together was heard clattering of armour and clamours of men, as if two armies had met in pitcht battell." Two Knights "that inhabited neere unto this prodigious place," agreed to investigate the cause; one only had courage to go on with the enterprise, and the next morning "his head was found in one place, the body in another, but neither could they discern the footing of horse or man; only the print of birds' feet, and those in myrie places," &c.—Heywood, p. 555.

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of Balaam's ass—that demons without either lungs or a tongue, are incapable of actual speech, yet become intelligible by certain sounds resembling words, though not words, from wanting respirations, just as what is heard of an herring when taken out of the sea." On some occasions, however, long conversations between men and demons are recorded; such as in the strange tale of "Devils in Silesia," given us by Master Heywood.

"In Silesia, a Nobleman hauing inuited many ghests to dinner, and prepared a liberall and costly feast for their entertainment; when all things were in great forwardnesse, in stead of his friends whom he expected, he onely receiued excuses from them that they could not come: euery one pretending some businesse, or other occasion, that he could not keep appointment. Whereat the Inuitor being horribly vexed, broke out into these words, saying, 'Since all these men have thus failed me, I wish that so many diuels of hell would feast with me to day, and eat vp the victuals prouided for them;' and so in a great rage left the house and went to church, where was that day a sermon. His attention to which hauing tooke away the greatest part of his choler, in the interim there arriued at his house a great troupe of horsmen, very blacke, and of extraordinarie aspect and stature; who, alighting in the court, called to a groome to take their horses; and bade another of the seruants run presently to his master, and tell him his ghests were come. The seruant amased runneth to church, and with that short breath and little sence he had left, deliuers to his master what had happened. The lord calls to the preacher, and desiring him for that time to breake off his sermon, and aduise him by his ghostly counsel, what was best to doe in so strict an exigent: hee persuades him, 'That all his seruants should with what speed they could depart the house.' In the meane time

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they with the whole congregation came within view of the mansion; of which all his seruants, as well men as maids, had with great affright cleared themselues, and for haste forgot and left behinde a yong childe, the noblemans sonne, sleeping in the cradle. By this the diuels were reuelling in the dining chamber, making a great noise, as if they had saluted and welcommed one another: and looked through the casements, one with the head of a beare, another a wolfe, a third a cat, a fourth a tygre, &c. taking bowles and quaffing as if they had drunke to the master of the house. By this time the nobleman seeing all his seruants safe, began to remember his sonne, and asked them 'what was become of the childe?' Those words were scarce spoke, when one of the diuels had him in his armes, and shewed him out of the window. The good-man of the house at this sight being almost without life, spying an old faithfull seruant of his, fetcht a deep sigh, and said, 'O me, what shall become of the infant!' The seruant seeing his master in that sad extasie, replyed, 'Sir, by Gods helpe I will enter the house and fetch the childe out of the power of yon diuell, or perish with him.' To whom the master said, 'God prosper thy attempt, and strengthen thee in thy purpose.' When hauing taken a blessing from the Priest, he enters the house, and comming into the next roome where the diuels were then rioting, hee fell upon his knees, and commended himselfe to the protection of Heauen. Then pressing in amongst them, he beheld them in their horrible shapes, some sitting, some walking, some standing. Then they all came about him at once, and asked him 'what busines he had there?' He in a great sweat and agonie (yet resolued in his purpose) came to that Spirit which held the infant, and said, 'In the name of God deliuer this childe to mee.' Who answered, 'No; but let thy master come and fetch him, who hath most

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interest in him.' The seruant replied, 'I am come now to doe that office and seruice to which God hath called me; by vertue of which, and by his power, loe, I seise vpon the Innocent;' and snatching him from the diuell, tooke him in his armes and carried him out of the roome. At which they clamored and called aloud after, 'Ho thou Knaue! ho thou Knaue! leaue the childe to vs, or we wil teare thee in pieces!' But he, vnterrified with their diabolicall menaces, brought away the infant, and deliuered it safe to the father. After some few dayes the spirits left the house, and the lord reentred into his antient possession. In this discourse is to be obserued, with what familiaritie these Familiar Spirits are ready to come, being inuited." [o]

The Foul Thief is the Author of all those strange and unwonted nocturnal sounds, which, although they were far more frequent in monasteries and abbeys, are yet occasionally heard even in colleges. Sometimes great noise of workmen and masons would be perceived; sometimes the Holy Fathers were startled from their dormers by profane songs resounding through the cloisters; and all laughter was at once set down as coming from the Prince of Darkness; but in concluding this, the last division of my subject, I shall lay before the Society a "wonder case" that once befell, and which is recorded in the Great Chronicles of St. Denis. [p]

So it was then, that on a dark winter's evening, the

o Heywood, Lib. ix. p. 600.

p I am afraid the "Great Chronicle" will be searched in vain—but I have only followed the example of every good trouverre from Maistre Wace downwards. There was in the popular mind of the Middle Age a singular passion for authority; and no trouverre would be listened to who did not profess to draw his materials from some Latin Chronicle or "Antique Geste." The real Authority for the ensuing history is Snorro.

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mighty King Charlemagne was sitting in a vaulted room of gramarye, unaccompanied, save by a personage of ancient and reverend presence, with whom he was holding high and mysterious discourse, concerning the things of the world of spirits. They told of the fearful Bisclaveret, or Wehr-wolf of Brittany; of the dark rider who sometimes swept by during the pauses of the storm in the deep woods of Germany; of the fierce demons of the Hartz mountains; of the Hill-folk and Trollds, dwelling in green and solitary places; and of the Holy Light which glimmered all night long over the icy hollows of the far Northern Mountains. At length, however, the discourse turned on the Mighty Men of Renown, whose fame was so constantly singing before the King, when the Minstrel touched his harp to the Lai or Romaunt. "Long," exclaimed King Charlemagne, "Long have I heard of the grim warriors of the elder day; would I might look on them with these mortal eyes! methinks all other delights would be vain, compared to that of beholding that good Knight, Theodoric of Berne—of holding converse with the mighty Hildebrandt—of hearing from the brave Siegfried how he slaughtered the fire-drake beneath the Linden tree—and of beholding all that mighty company of Knights with whose high deeds of prowess old story rings!" "Thy wish," answered the magician, "may be gratified; but it must be a stout heart and an unquailing eye which can look without fear on the grim Kempes of old: though they sleep beneath their cairns on the tempest-swept sides of the hills, I have but to wave this wand, and swifter than the storm blast they will come thronging to thine ancient halls." "Call them," replied the King, "I will abide their coming."

"With that there blew a loud loud wind,
With that there blew a low;
And the barred door on its hinges turned,
Turned silently and slow."

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And as the great oaken doors flew open, strange and unwonted indeed was the company who entered.

——— Two and two—armed as for the battle field, and mounted on the good steeds that had carried them ages ago over mountain and through forest — came the old chiefs of the Teutons! There was the brave Knight of Stauffenbergh, who had dwelt for many a long year in the coral halls of the mermaiden, far beneath the sea. There too was Sivard the Snaresvend, and he bore in his gauntletted hand the huge pine tree to which he had been bound when he fought in the hazel lists with the famed Son of King Abelon. There too was Syr Beowulf, and he came from the wild country of the Angles, and glittering in his grasp you might see the magic sword forged by the Sea Hnickar, wherewith he had slain the fierce mother of Grendel. But in the centre of all, mounted on a jet black destrère, and arrayed in sable armour, came the mighty Theodoric of Berne; over him floated the ancient banner of his race, and his long fair hair fell in thick masses down his shoulders. As the solemn pageant moved up the hall, wild and unearthly voices seemed to fill all the air with a strange melody; and the eyes of the spectral Knights gleamed with an elvish light, as dismounting from their steeds they arranged themselves in a circle around King Charlemagne.

* * * * * *

—— —— —— Deeply indeed is it to be wished, that the good Monk of St. Denis, as he sat in the scriptorium of his monastery, with the sunlight streaming through the richly stained casements on the parchments whereon he was recording the wondrous tale of Giants, Fiends, and Witches—deeply indeed is it to be wished that Brother Ambrosius had recorded in his Chronicle the import of this

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conference between King Charlemagne and the heroes of the olden time. It is to be presumed, however, that even he was unable to obtain the wished-for information; for if we may judge from what he has preserved for our edification, he would not willingly have omitted such an opportunity of displaying his eloquence—and the skill of Brother Hilarius, the Illuminator, would certainly have been employed, for the purpose of presenting to our delighted gaze, in all the glories of vermilion, azure, and gold, the interior of that stately hall, with all its aëreal visitants, encircled with an appropriate border of griffins' wings. So it is, however! and if this Society were inclined to patronize morality and moralization, and if I myself were favourably disposed to either virtue, I might seize the occasion for the purpose of shewing how all sublunary things resemble this right famous and noble historie.

"All to nothing swiftly tend,
Fairest things have soonest end—
Destrère stumbleth—cloth abradeth—
Lily falleth—red rose fadeth—
Broken as a rocky stream,
Such is life's unquiet dream!"

"Oh, goodly usage of the Antique time!"

Well may we doubt whether we have done wisely and well in banishing that high and noble spirit of poetry, whence arose all the wild and strange superstitions we have been considering: well may we doubt, whether rail-roads and cottages ornées are desirable substitutes for the lordly castles of our ancestors, and the stately roads of

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Belinus, rough though they were. The whole life of that olden time was romance, and the Knights themselves were often the trouverres of the wild Lai or Romaunt,

"Or of Partenope—or of Yppomedon,"

which commemorated the high deeds of emprize of the princes and paladins of chivalry—

"Merry, merry it was in the good grene wood
Among the levës sheene."

The great highways of the kingdom, still the same which had witnessed the march of the Roman soldiery, swept on through tracts of wild forest, wherein one might constantly see, glancing through the brushwood, or bounding along the deepening glades,

"The hart, the hind, the doe, and the roe,
And of all wild beasts great plentye."

At times there would come floating on the wind the jingling of the bells from some stately Lord Abbots' mule, who anon might be seen emerging from the green paths of the wood, with a cope of curiously wrought needlework on his shoulders, the cross on his breast, and his breviary under his arm: now it would be some "Ladye fayre" on her "Jennett of Spayne," trapped with velvet and minever—now the glittering armouries of a Knight and his train—now the green jerkins and baldricks of some

"—— —— —— bold outlaw,
Idling in the greenèschawe."

Here and there rose the dark turrets of a baronial hold, from beneath whose massive portcullis issued at times the

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bright and glittering procession of Knights and Ladies, with all the banners and banderols, and pennons of Chivalry, colouring the very air with their gules, and azure, and vermeil; or at eventide, the deep tones of the vesper service floated on through the convent garden, whilst "corbel and carving quaint and grim" frowned more and more strangely in the passing light. The manor-house with its hunting and its hawking;—the lordly field of the tournament, with its heralds and pursuivants, its wardens and seneschals, its trumpets and its cloth of gold;—the stately banquet, with its cranes and its peacocks, its Yppocrasse and clary: and, crowning all, the broad banners of the noble houses of England, proudly floating from their lofty holds, over oratory, hall, and bower: such are the scenes which rise before us, as we give ourselves up to the influence of the olden time;—but

"—— The Knights are dust,
Their good swords are rust,
Their souls are with the Saints, we trust."

And the few relics of nobler ages, fast passing away, seem to echo the plaintive motto of one of the most illustrious of our English houses—"Ubi lapsus? Quid feci?"

* * * * * *

Still, however, the Poetry of the past lingers around them; though the walls once hung with "cloth of arrasse, rychte fayre and goodlye to beholde," are now green with the "waving tracery" of wild flower wreaths: though no rustling of silks and velvets is heard in the great hall of the castle, or waving of knightly plumes makes the tilt-yard as a field of the new fallen snow—yet the scenes and the ages which have once been

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" Recorded by the Muses, live for ay—
Ne may with stormynge showers be washt awaye
Ne bitter breathynge windes, with harmfull blast,
Nor age, nor envy, shal them ever wast."

hence still, in the wilder districts and countries, those beautiful old superstitions yet linger,—in every mysterious sound that fills the air, the peasant still hears the trampling of Odin's steed, which, many centuries ago, took fright at the sound of a Church bell. The memory of Balder is still preserved in the flower which bears his name, and Freya's spinning-wheel still glimmers in the stars of the constellation Orion. The sound of the Merman's flute is heard in tinkling brooks, and his song in waterfalls. The Oak Maidens still dwell in the woods, and still perhaps in the wild glens of the Dofrefield, some fortunate eye may behold—

" The merry elves their morrice pacing
To aërial minstrelsy."

still they occasionally sweep by on their shadowy steeds, when the Queen and all her court are hunting the hart in some deep glade of the forest, and their emerald rings are yet green on the turf of our brown and barren moors. They were the sources of great poets' inspiration—and like their verses they may not altogether perish.

" For not to have been dipt in Lethe lake
Could save the son of Thetis from to die—
But that blind bard did him immortal make
With verses—dipt in dews of Castalie—
Which made the Eastern Conqueror to crie.
Fortunate Youth! whose lofty virtue found
So brave a Tromp—thy noble acts to sound!"

q Spenser—Ruines of Time.

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On the Origin

Of the Romance Literature

OF THE XII. AND XIII. CENTURIES.

CHIEFLY WITH A REFERENCE TO ITS MYTHOLOGY.

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"At my begynning, first I you beseche
Haue me excused of my rude speche;
I learned neuer rhetorike, certayne—
Thinge that I speke, mote be bare and playne,
I slept neuer on the mounte of Pernaso;
Ne lerned neuer Marcus Tullius Cicero;
— — — — — —
Coloures of rhetorike ben to me quaynte;
My spirit feleth not of such matere
This ys my tale; yf ye wol yt here."

Chaucer—The Frankelyn's Prologue.

"In short, he became so infatuated with this kind of study, that he passed whole days and nights over these books; and thus, with little sleeping and much reading, his brains were dried up and his intellect deranged. His imagination was full of all that he had read; of enchantments, contests, battles, challenges, wounds, tortures, and impossible absurdities, and so firmly was he persuaded of the truth of the whole tissue of visionary fiction, that, in his mind, no history in the world was more authentic."—Don Quixote de la Mancha.

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CHAPTER I.

POETICAL FEELING OF THE EUROPEAN NATIONS.

> "Imagination, not permitted here
> To waste her powers, as in the worldling's mind,
> On fickle pleasures, and superfluous cares
> And trivial ostentation—is left free
> And puissant to range the solemn walks
> Of time and nature, girded by a zone
> That, while it binds, invigorates and supports."
>
> Despondency Corrected.

IN examining into the causes which led to the rise of a new and beautiful literature in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is obvious that we must direct our attention more to the actual *Spirit* of Poetry amongst the nations of Northern and Western Europe, than to the few remains of rude verse which have been preserved to us. The Romances of Chivalry, with all their throngs of "knights and barons bold," their princes and paladins, yet every here and there point as strongly to their origin in the age of the sea kings, as does the Voluspa, or the Death song of King Haco; and it would indeed be difficult to believe that a period so wild and so stirring, when

> "The warriors of the world went forth
> To seek another land"—

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when the North Seas were covered with the fleets of these "dark riders of the wave,"—men too, who, followers of the most poetic system of mythology which the world has ever seen, beheld in the storms which swept the sea the actual presence of the evil beings who had their habitation in the depths of the ocean—who heard the voice of their gods in the wild wailing of the wind and the roar of the thunder—and who peopled every mountain and wood and glen with strange and aërial inhabitants—it would indeed be remarkable, if such an era should have past away and left no traces on the literature of succeeding ages. Their deeply mysterious rites and symbolic ceremonies, their wild and gloomy superstitions, spread with their race over almost all Europe, and the Goth looked forth on the "living gold" of the Mediterranean, on the ravines of the Alpuxarras, and the vega of Granada, with the same feelings as his remote brethren who retained their ancient seats beneath the pine forests of Scandinavia. The dream of the Lady Alda—

"Oh I was upon a mountain, in a bare and desert place,
And I saw a mighty eagle, and a faulcon he did chase,
And to me the faulcon came, and I hid it in my breast,
But the mighty bird pursuing, came and rent away my vest;
And he scattered all the feathers—and blood was on his beak,
And ever as he tore and tore, I heard the faulcon shriek—
Now read my vision damsels—now read my dream to me,
For my heart may well be heavy that doleful sight to see"—

is but a repetition of the magnificent old Gothic ballad of Sir Aldingar—

"I fell in a sweven on Thursday eve
On my bed whereon I lay;
I dreamt that a grype and a grimlie beast
Had carried my crown away:

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My gorget and my kirtle of gold,
And all my fair head gear—
And that he worried me with his beak
And would to his nest Y beare."

So it was in all those symbolic ceremonies which took place during the administration of justice, or the election of magistrates. The adalid of King Alonzo the Wise was to be raised on a shield by twelve others, and whilst his face was turned to the east, he drew the "sweet and holy sign" in the air with his drawn sword, exclaiming, "In the name of God, I defy all the enemies of the faith, and of my lord the King, and of this land;" and amid the clashing of buckles and the shouting of the tribes, the ancient Norwegian chief was lifted on the dark blue shield in the plain of Mora. When the shine mote was to be convened, the summoning symbol was borne by the weary husbandman from dwelling to dwelling, over moor and wild—the hieroglyphical token was varied in its form according to the intent. An arrow called the people to sit in judgment upon the murderer, or told them the land was herried by the enemy. War was signified by the fiery cross of the Gael: but in Scandinavia the cross indicated that the precepts of the Church had been violated, and that the transgressors against the "Christendom's bolkr" were to appear before the court. These most ancient principles of symbolism acquired a new and peculiar influence on the spread of Christianity. Sacchi defines the symbolic art of the early Christians as a sort of mystic science understood by the initiate alone. It was divided into hermetic and orphic—the first referring to the plan and shape of the church, the number of angles and faces it presented; and the second, or orphic, consisting in the ornaments or other accessories regulating the colour and quantity of the materials employed,—the disposition of the cyphers and

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monograms sculptured over the gates and other parts of the building,—the figures of animals, and other sculptured ornaments, all having a mystic meaning.[a]

Similarly a portion of the national character and feeling was the belief in the mysterious power of words. The whole saga of Gunnlang with the serpent's tongue turns on this idea. The youthful poet sought instruction in the law from Thorstein the Wise; a year was passed in listening to Thorstein's lessons; but the several studies of Gunnlang were relieved by the contemplation of the charms of the fair-haired Helga, the daughter of the sage—and he loved and knew that he was beloved again. It chanced that they were sitting at the board, when Gunnlang spoke to Thorstein: "One law form yet remaineth, which thou hast not taught me—nor do I yet know how a maiden is to be wedded." Thorstein answered, "that few words were needed," and he repeated the form of espousal. Gunnlang then craved leave to repeat his lesson to Helga, a request to which the father assented, after slightly hinting that the sport was idle. The lover, however, pronounced the wedding words with precision and solemnity, and named the witnesses—and in after time Gunnlang vindicated his right to the hand of Helga in bloodshed and in death.

The poetical feeling of the middle ages exhibits itself in almost every page of their history, and is most conspicuous in all the detail of their domestic life which has come down to us: their very medical receipts carry us back to the days when every flower and leaf and tree were invested with strange power and magic might.

If the elf-siddene or night-mare was to be chased away

[a] Sacchi—Antichita Romantiche d' Italia.

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holy verses, the Gospel, and the Psalm, were to be written on the sacred patina; water was to be brought by the purest hands from the running stream, in deadlike silence, thyme and valerian and fennel were to be infused, and with the decoction the words were to be washed off from the hallowed dish: and after penitential Psalms and masses, the potion was administered. So for the quartan fever, on midsummer-day, after sunset or before sunrise, St. John's wort was to be gathered, and kept till yule, when it was laid on the altar until three masses were sung, after which it would put forth new flowers and leaves—then stamped and tempered with warm wine, let it be drank "dicendo ter, Pater Noster." Others are scarcely less imaginative, though more singular: "To provoke hatred of wine, cause a man to drink the blossomes of rye, gathered at such time as the rye bloometh—or else take a frog, and let her lie in wine till she die,—otherwise, marke diligentlie where the owle haunteth, that you may gette some of her egs—frie them, and give them to your drunken manne to eate."[b]

In the following observations, therefere, on the Origin of Romance, I propose to direct the attention of the Society more immediately to its mythology, forming as it does by far the most conspicuous point from which to conduct our researches,—I have only to hope accordingly that the

> "Black spirits and white,
> Red spirits and grey,"

which were duly dilated upon on a former occasion, did not strike such terror into the minds of my learned brethren as to produce a thrill of horror at the bare idea of a "haustus bis capiendus,"—and, in concluding this introductory chapter, I shall beg to present the Society with an—

b Liebault—Maison Rustique, p. 761.

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Inter-Motto.

CHRISTOPHER SLY.

By Saint Anne! A good matter, surely—comes there any more of it?

PAGE.

My Lord: 'tis but begun.

SLY.

'Tis a very excellent piece of matter, madam, Lady! would 'twere done!

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CHAPTER II.

SCANDINAVIAN ORIGIN OF ROMANCE.

"Of Gothic structure was the Northern side,
O'erwrought with ornaments of barb'rous pride:
There huge Colosses rose, with trophies crowned,
And Runic characters were graved around.
There sat Zamolxis with erected eyes
And Odin here in mimic trances dies.
There on rude iron columns, smear'd with blood,
The horrid forms of Scythian heroes stood:
Druids and Bards, (their once loud harps unstrung,)
And youths that died to be by poets sung."

Pope—Temple of Fame.

"To Norroway, to Norroway,
To Norroway o'er the faem."

Sir Patrick Spens.

It will be impossible, where so much is before us, to take anything like even a general survey of the great Collection of Northern Mythology and Poetry—the famous Edda of Sæmund the Wise: it has been well called "the poetry of ice," and would seem to be the almost necessary production of a country abounding in the wildest forms of gloom and grandeur, and whose inhabitants were a nation of warriors. The Vikingr, we are told, chaunted hymns to the gods at sunrise and sunset, and the northern sailors are yet compelled, by an ancient law, to sing to the Virgin at

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those hours,—and amid the clash of swords and "joy of battle," the Scald accompanied his chief, in order that his own eyes might behold those deeds of "derring do" which he was afterwards to hand down to distant ages in the wild rhymes of his saga. But whilst the whole spirit of the north was essentially warlike, there were other causes which contributed not a little to throw a peculiar spirit of poetry and romance over both their mythological poems and their fierce battle songs. The existence of an extraordinary race of men, distinguished by most remarkable peculiarities from the Scythic and Celto-Scythic inhabitants, known by the various appellations of Iotun, Bersækir, Cappar, or Champions, and Blaumen, and which have apparently furnished the type for all the many monsters which fell beneath the valorous strokes of Jack the Giant Killer and divers other heroes of the olden time, is perfectly established, and genuine matter of history. "Of giants," saith the exceeding learned Saxo Grammaticus, "of giants there be three sorts: first, the vulgar giant, who excelled all mankind in bodily stature: next, the wise men, who penetrated into the secret operations of nature, and were enemies of the first species: and thirdly, the offspring of the two preceding; inferior to the one parent in magnitude of body, to the other in knowledge." It would appear that the first of these, or the genuine sons of Anak, are those with whom we have to do at present—agreeing in a singular manner with those few and dim notices of nations and tribes of enormous physical strength and huge stature preserved to us not only in the sacred writings, but in the earliest poems and records of almost all people. I shall leave to abler hands the long promised dissertation on the Zamzummims, who belong to this class, and proceed at once to notice the Bersækir and Blaumen.

Bersækir then, is the Norsk denomination of a species

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of men, answering to the description of giants in every particular, and existing as late as the eleventh century. They were kept by the chiefs about their households, more in the light of brutes than of men, and lodged in a kind of porch, about the outhouses, or beneath the steps of the castle gates, like watch dogs; leading the kind of life which in the romance of Valentine and Orson is attributed to the last named warrior: and it is to them we must refer the origin of the "salvage men" used in heraldry as supporters. They were forbidden to seek shelter during the most tremendous storms, and were not allowed to dress their wounds until the conclusion of the battle. Alf of Norway had sixty, and none were enrolled among the number who could not lift a stone in his court yard which required the strength of twelve ordinary men to raise. They were subject to a species of frenzy termed "Bersæksgangr," not like the mook or muck of the Malays, which is a kind of drunkenness produced by opium, but resembling, it would rather seem, the paroxysms of epilepsy. They felt the approach of the fit, during which they were ungovernable and irresistible; and if no enemy was at hand, they would go into the woods and spend the force of the paroxysm upon trees and rocks—after which they were so greatly debilitated that they were less than other men. A similar affection seems to have been prevalent at a comparatively late period among the Scottish Highlanders, where it was called "miri-cath," or the madness of battle.[c]

There can be little or no doubt but that these Iotun and Bersækir have been one of the principal types of the giant or ogre of romance. Sufficiently terrible in themselves, they

c Is there not a reference to the Bersæksgangr in the Romance of Merlin, (Ellis, vol. i.) where it is said of Sir Gawaine, "that from nine in the morning till noon, his muscular powers were doubled—from thence till nones they relapsed into their ordinary state,—and from nones till evensong they were again doubled?"

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have been made ten times more so in the wild mythology of the north, into which they have been incorporated, with "additions and corrections." The Trollds, who originally seem to have been of giant stature, and who have been curiously confounded with the more genuine Duergar or Elf, are indebted to the Iotun for more than one characteristic: throughout the middle ages they were believed to wander through ploughed lands about Christmas, and seem thus connected with the hellequin and wild army of the German forests; for these also were a mixture of real historical recollections with the primeval idea of tutelary genii, spirits of the earth, air, fire, and water.[d]

The system, or rather systems of the edda, harmonize fully with these rude and fierce ideas. There would seem to be at least two distinct cosmogonies contained in these poems, one of which, that of the ash-tree yggdrasil, under which the whole universe is figured, has apparently more of an oriental cast, and is therefore the most recent. It is this character of orientalism, which, having undergone a reformation in the north, has produced some of the most singular forms of German superstition. The enchanted crocodiles have become enchanted frogs—who again turn out universally to be dignitaries in disguise. Lions of all hues, black, red, grey and brown, flourish abundantly in these fertile storehouses: dragons were their daily companions, griffins their most intimate friends. The "Genii" of Iceland and Norway are to all intents and purposes identical with the "gins" and "deevs" who dwell in the great sand deserts of central Asia—and the mystic ceremonies of

d Scheffer (History of Lapland) gives a singular reason for this belief,—"In like manner they esteem the first day of Christmas to be unlucky, insomuch that masters of families go not out of their cottages, not so much as to Church, but send their children and servants, for fear of I know not what Spirits and Dæmons, which they suppose to wander about the air in great companies upon that day. — — — This superstition, I suppose, sprang from a misinterpretation of the story, which they heard from their Priest, how a great host of Angels came down from heaven, upon our Saviour's Nativity, and frighted the Shepherds."

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the drött differ scarcely at all from the priestly rites of ancient Persia. Strange as it may appear, the history of the far-famed Tom Thumb may be illustrated by a reference to the marvellous deeds of an ancient Rajah; and Whittington's Cat yet receives homage in the wild mountains of Affghanistan. Odin's palace, again, is singularly identical with the wonderful cities of the eastern Ginnistan. Shadukiam and Amberabad, with all their marvels, where

> "Rose the gold branches, hung with emerald leaves,
> Blossomed with pearls, and rich with ruby fruit."

The mode of approaching Valhalla was by the bridge Bifrost, or the Rainbow, the red or centre part of which was fire, and was intended to prevent the scaling of heaven by the frost-trolls and mountain giants of Utgarda land, with whom the gods were constantly at war: at its foot stood Heimdall, the porter of the gods—he slept more lightly than a bird, and could discover objects by night or day farther off than an hundred leagues; he could hear the grass in the meadows, and the wool on the backs of sheep, growing; and carried in one hand a sword and in the other a trumpet, the sound of which could be heard through all the nine worlds. Around Valhalla itself grew a thick wood, called Glasir, but it had nothing in common with earthly shades, for the leaves of the trees were of pure gold, and the sound of the wind through them made the most delicious music.[e] The palace itself was of enormous dimensions, having five hundred and forty gates, and it was roofed with golden shields.[f] On its summit was an eagle with its wings spread,[g] and its courts were thronged with the einheriar, or souls of the warriors who had fallen in battle; they were fed on the flesh of the boar serimner,

e Skaldæ codex Upsaliensis. (l. c. pag. 130.)—Finn Magnussen. sub. voc. Valhall.
f Grimnis, mal. st. viii. g Grimnis mal. st. x.

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who, though killed and eaten every day, was always alive again in the evening. Andrimner, a master of the gastronomic science, before whom Jarrin would tremble and Mrs. Glasse look pale, prepared the meal; and the mead was furnished by the goat Heidrun. At the däised end of the hall sat the shadowy form of the "king of men,"—Odin, the terrible and severe God,—on his shoulders were two ravens, who wander over the whole world in the course of each day, and return about the hour of repast, with a due report of what is going on in "middle earth." Odin never eats, but gives his share of food to two wolves who crouch beside his throne, and contents himself with wine, "which" says the Edda, "is both meat and drink to him." Early each morning the einheriar are awakened by the crowing of a cock with a golden comb, and eight hundred of them issue from each of the five hundred and forty gates, which are all of silver. They passed their time till the hour of dinner in fighting, and with such hearty good will, that multitudes fell; but when that great moment arrived, all arose, perfectly well, to contend over the cups as strenuously as they had done in the field. They were served by the Valkyriæ, the only females admitted into Valhalla.

The remarkable similarity which this description bears to the famous abode of the faërie, the mysterious Isle of Avalon, is well deserving of attention. "Avalon," says the romance of "Guillaume au court nez,"[h] "is the most magnificent palace which has ever been built, and whoever touches one of its stones, although covered with wounds, shall instantly be healed. It shines like fire—every gate is of ivory, and its walls of gold inlaid with pearls, had five hundred windows to admit the light of day—its roof was also of gold, and on its summit was an

h See an extract in the Appendix to Le Roux de Lincy—Livre des Legendes.

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eagle having eyes of "carbuncle stone," and in its beak an enormous diamond. The country around presented all the delights of the golden age—the vine and the pomegranate rose in every direction; the corn field waved unsown. "No dainty flower, or herb that grows on ground," but flourished there in wildest beauty and luxuriance. It was in sooth—

> ——————— "a pleasant paradise,
> Full of sweet flowers and daintiest delights;
> Such as on earth man could not more devise,
> With pleasures choice to feed his cheerful sprights;
> Not that which Merlin by his magic slights
> Made for the gentle squire to entertain
> His fair Belphœbe, could this garden stain."[i]

As in Valhalla the inhabitants of Avalon pursued amusements similar to those which had occupied them when on earth—the ladyes go forth on their hawking expeditions,

> "And of game they find grete haunt,
> Partrich, and fesaunt, and cormoraunt."

the pipe and tabor, "and all manner of minstrelsye," are constantly heard under the green shade, "when the wedur is cler and bryght," and

> "The Kynge of Fairye with his route
> Comes to hunt alle about,
> With dunnynge and with blowinge,
> And houndys gret cryinge."

Like Valhalla, too, it was far from the land of the living, and full of

> "Folk that were thider ybrought,
> And thought dead and wer not."[j]

i Spenser—Ruins of Time.

j Romance of Sir Orfeo. (Ritson, vol. ii.)

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and the queen of fairye addresses Thomas the Rhymer, when about to convey him to this mysterious region,

> " Take thy leve, Thomas, at sone and mone
> At gresse, and at everye tree—
> Thys twelve month shal you with me gone
> Medyl erth you sall not see."

To assert that at least one half of the marvels which form the principal portion of the Romance literature, had their origin equally with those

> —— " wide worlds of faërie, far more bright
> Than aught on earth can be,"

in the ancient mythologies of the north, would not by any means be going beyond what is capable of the fullest proof. In a previous paper read before this Society, the present " humble pen," adverted to the share which the duergar or dwarfs had in the formation of the character of the " good people;"—their peculiarities in the western islands, where all the superstitions partake more or less of a northern feeling, are genuinely Scandinavian. " There is a pigmies' isle," says Dean Monro, " at the north point of the Lewis, with ane littel kirk in it, of their awn handy work. Within this kirk, the ancients of that country of Lewis says, that the saids pigmies has been eirded (buried) there; many men of divers countreys has delvit up deeplie the flure of the littel kirke, and I myself amongst the reste, and hev found in it, deepe under the erthe, certaine bones and round heddes, of wonderful littel qualitie, allegit to be the bones of the said pigmies, quhilk may be likely, according to sondrie histories that we reade of the pigmies." It would be uncivil to doubt the Dean's veracity, albeit there is no island at all, at present, off the north point of Lewis;—so all we have to do, is to insert

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this marvellous history in the same page of our note books, with Platerus's account of the wonderful skeleton of Ricon de Valmont, a great warrior, seventeen feet in length, which he saw at Lucerne, and Plutarch's history of the skeleton of Antæus at Tangier, which was thirty yards long.

The history of heroes who figure in the Teutonic cycle of Romance—Sigurdr—Theodoric of Berne—and the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf, would shew most clearly the *traditive* nature of this early poetry. The adventures of the god—Odin or Thor—pass into those of the mortal whose name has become the centre round which all that is great, wonderful, and heroic is brought from every quarter. *Beowulf*, or the tamer of the wolf, is a most remarkable instance—and this celebrated lay or romaunt, for such it unquestionably is, quite as much as "Horne-Child," or "Havelok the Dane," whilst it records the fight between the hero and the fierce spirit of the moors, Grendel, seems to be identical with the Eddaic myth of Odin's combat with the evil being—the wolf Fenris.

The personification of something divine and supernatural, and generally evil, under the figure of a wolf, is most widely spread. Its "malevolent sagacity, fearful howling, and that singular obtrusiveness which leads the wolf to roam about the habitations of mankind," would seem to be the causes of the mysterious qualities thus attributed to it:[k] nor must it be forgotten that throughout the early centuries, whilst the continent was covered with thick forests and impenetrable masses of jungle and brush-wood, the wolf was the great plague of Europe. In Athelstane's reign they abounded in Yorkshire, and small huts were built in the woods "to defend passengers from the wolves, that they should not be devoured by them;" and such ravages

k Col. Hamilton Smith's first vol. on "Dogs," in the Naturalist's Library: to whom I am indebted for many notices of great value.

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did these animals make during winter, particularly in January, when the cold was most severe, that the Saxons distinguished that month by the name of the "wolf moneth;" and as late as 1577 the wolf was destructive to the flocks in Scotland, nor were they entirely extirpated, till about 1680, when the last fell by the hand of the famous Sir Ewen Cameron. The ravages of the Saracens on the southern coasts of France and Spain left the country so desolate, and caused such an extraordinary increase in the number of wolves, that pilgrims could no longer pass to Rome by the maritime Alps.[1] And the black wolf of Spain is yet to be dreaded in the passes of the Pyrenees, where it congregates in large troops.

It was from the mysterious character given to the wolf in the religions of antiquity, that that most remarkable idea prevalent during the middle ages—the transformation of men into wolves at certain periods—seems to have arisen. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this belief assumed the form of a disease; and numerous instances occur, where the individual, on being brought before examiners, appears fully persuaded not only that he had undergone transformation, but also that he had devoured children and dead bodies when in the form of a wolf:—and that these unfortunate beings actually were for a time under the influence of a phrensy like that of the old Bersækir, (who also drank wolves' blood to inspire them with ferocity)—and that they actually fed on human flesh is proved beyond all possible doubt. Both sorcerers and evil spirits have in all ages had the power of transforming themselves, and producing a change of shape in the persons of their victims; and the ancient belief in the doctrine of metempsychosis was, as is well known, prevalent throughout western Europe.

1 Reinaud—Invasions des Sarrasins en France,—et de France en Savoie, en Piemont, et dans la Suisse, p. 176.

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In Britanny it was believed that all sins were visited by a metamorphosis: for smaller crimes a man might be turned into a wind, cloud, or fire; but wehr-wolf was the greatest pain. Sir Walter Scott was of opinion that it is only since the extirpation of wolves that our British sorceresses have adopted the disguise of hares, cats, and other familiar animals; and it must certainly be confessed that Jarmara, an Impe "like to a dog, verie fatte and plumpe with verie short legges," or what Matthew Hopkins describes as a "black thing proportioned like a cat, only thrice as big, sitting on a strawberry bed, and fixing its eyes on this informant,"[m] nay, even the marvellous "cat Ruterkin" himself, are but poor substitutes for the "gold footed wolf," who swept by in the storm of chace when Odin came forth in the forests of Germany; yet if a cat fail in dignity, what shall we say of a sow? Listen, Mr. President, I pray you,—it is Froissart himself who speaks—and we have only to premise that Raymond, Lord of Corasse, had a familiar named Orthone.

"Well," quod Orthone, "ye wil do so moche, that ye wil lose me, and I to go fro you, for ye desyre to moche of me." "Nay," quod the Knight, "thou shalt not go fro me; let me se thee ones, and I will desyre no more." "Well," quod Orthone, "ye shal se me tomorrow; take hede, the fyrst thynge that ye se, after ye be out of your chamber, it shall be I." "Well," quod the Knyght, "I am than content; go thy waye—lette me slepe." And so Orthone departed, and the next mornynge the lord arose and yssued out of his chambre, and wente to a windowe, and looked downe into the courte of the castell, and cast about his eyen. And the fyrst thynge he sawe was a sowe—the greatest that ever he sawe; and she seemed

m A true and exact relation of the late Witches in the County of Essex. (reprint, London, 1837.)

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to be so leane, and yvell favoured, that there was nothynge on her but the skynne and the bones, with long eares, and a longe, leane mouthe. The Lord of Corasse had marveyle of that leane sowe, and was wery of the sighte of her, and commaunded his men to fetch his houndes, and sayde, "Lette the dogges hunt her to dethe, and devour her." His seruaunts opened the kenells, and lette oute his houndes, and dyd sette them on thys sowe—and at the last, the sowe made a grete crye, and looked up to the Lord of Corasse as he looked out at a windowe, and so sodaynlye vanyshed awaye, no man wycte howe. Than the Lord of Corasse entred into his chambre, right pensyve, and than he remembered hym of Orthone, his messangere, and sayd, "I repent me that I sette my houndys on hym; it is an adventure an I here any more of him; for he sayd to me oftentymes, that yf Y displeased hym, Y shulde lose him." The lord sayde truth, for never after he came into the Castle of Corasse, and also the Knyghte dyed the same yere next followynge.[n]

n Lord Berners' Froissart, vol. ii. chap. 37.

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CHAPTER III.

ORIGIN OF ROMANCE IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICTS OF ENGLAND, AND IN ARMORICA.

"Why, man, there was once a people called the Piks." ——

"More properly *Picts*," interrupted the Baronet.

"I say the *Pikar, Pihar, Piochtar, Piaghter*, or *Peughtar*," vociferated Oldbuck, "they spoke a Gothic dialect."

"Genuine Celtic," again asseverated the Knight.

"Gothic! Gothic! I'll go to death upon it!" counter-asseverated the Squire.

The Antiquary.

THE literature of Europe during the middle ages presents, so to speak, two distinct pictures: on the one side we have the great hall of the castle hung with its armour and its banners—strewed with rushes, and adorned with divers goodly lights of stained glass; on the dais is the seat of the lord, and by its side a perch for hawks, whilst his noble brach is crouching at his feet;—but if you will look towards yonder window, in whose recess certain young knights are constantly lounging, you may discern the huge "boke of romaunts," with its gorgeous illuminations—blazing with azure and gold and crimson,—perhaps it is the "noble and joyous historie of the Gestes of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table,—together with the dolorous death and departure of them all:" or it

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is one of the "great and manie volumes of Seint Graal, Ghalehot, and Lancelotte du Lac, Gawayne, Perceval,—Lyonel,—and Tristram—and many other,—of whom were over long to rehearse, and who to me unknown." o

On the other hand, the mist from Cornelius's mirror suddenly floats away, and a right solemn and stately scene is glimmering in the depths of that magic glass:—

"All slowly up the aisle afar
With sable cowl and scapular,
And snow white stoles in order due,
The holy Fathers, two and two,
In long procession came;
Taper, and host, and book they bare,
And holy banner flourished fair,
With the Redeemer's name.
* * * * * * *
And far the echoing ailes prolong
The awful burthen of their song,
Dies Iræ, Dies Illa
Solvet sæclum in favillâ."

There were in fact but two species of writers—the good monk who indited the chronicle of his times, and the trouvère, to whose

——————— "ardent symphony sublime and high,
Fair dames and crested chiefs attention bowed!
For still the burthen of their minstrelsy
Was knighthood's dauntless deed, and beauty's matchless eye."

Yet even these, apparently of such totally distinct schools, constantly encroached on each other's provinces; the trouvère took the subject of his lay from the "Chronique de

o Proheme of Godefrey of Boloyne.

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St. Denis," or the veracious history of the Archbishop Turpin :—and it is much to be feared, that the worthy Fathers, as in the cold winter evenings they assembled round the huge fire of pine logs, blazing in the capacious chimney of their refectory, not unfrequently whiled away the time by the recitation of divers verses, which it is to be hoped came under the description of " carmina honesta," allowed by the statutes to echo through our college halls on festal occasions: what should we think too of a reverend personage who in the present day should mount the pulpit and give out as his text such a one as that of Stephen Langton—

" Alice la belle in the morn arose,
Donning her garments fetuouslie—
Straightway into her bower she goes
Five flowerets pulleth she—
But oh, sweet may, turn those eyes away,
For alas! thou lovest not me!" [p]

The Society may be curious to know how such a text could possibly be *improved* upon to the edification of the audience; therefore I beg to inform them that Alice la belle was a type of the Virgin Mary, and that the five flowerets were five graces—simplicity, meekness, content, purity, and benevolence. Alas! such flowers grow no longer wild, they have shared the fate of the Dodo.

A very powerful cause, however, of the introduction in the monastic compositions of the superstitions and personages who figure in romance, was undoubtedly the pagan ideas and feelings which lingered so long in the northern districts of Britain; the fact that paganism continued in the wilder countries of Europe to a remarkably late period, is worthy of attention; and we shall have to notice it more

p Abbè de la Rue, Histoire des Bardes.

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at length when we come to Armorica or Bas-bretagne. The maps of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, according to the principles of those geographers, who—

——————— "for want of towns,
Place elephants on pathless downs,"

represent the inhabitants of Poland, Lithuania, and Russia as clad in furs, and bowing before the altars of certain demons of surpassing ugliness—and without being aware of their correctness in so doing, they seem to have been perfectly right. Amongst the Letts, the habit of sacrificing animals to their divinities was only put an end to by Frederic the Second of Prussia at the end of the seventeenth century. Meletius has preserved the prayer addressed to Pergubri, one of their chief divinities. "O Pergubri, thou it is that sendest the winter away, and bringest back the beautiful spring; it is thou who coverest the hedges and meadows with green, and claddest the forest with leaves." In the Celtic districts of Britain, we have not a few indications of the late continuance of Druidic ideas; and the trouvère himself would seem to be the lineal successor of the ancient bard or ovydd, whilst the fierceness of the romancers, who seem peculiarly to enjoy the description, if they did not the spectacle, of the "heddes and armes," which

"Under the hors did hoppe,"

finds a strict counterpart among the wild cearnach of the Highlands and the half savage tribes of Wales; even in the time of Giraldus de Barri, these last were accustomed to leave the right arm of their children unchristened, that is, unimmersed in the baptismal font, from the belief that it would thus strike a stronger and a surer blow. The bardic office, indeed, seems eminently Celtic; and one of

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the triads asserts the "three indispensables of a gentleman" to be "his harp, his vest, and his kettle." However this may be, it was one of the qualities of an accomplished Knight to touch the harp with skill whilst he sang a

"Chant delectable et plaisant."

Sir Tristrem is welcomed by King Arthur as most skilled in music. "Thenne came Quene Guenever, and manie ladyes with her, and alle the ladyes sayden at one voyce, welcome Sir Tristrem; welcome, sayde the damosels; welcome, sayde Knyghtes; welcome, sayd Arthur, for one of the beste Knyghtes and the genttylst of the world, and the manne of moost worschip, for of alle maner of huntynge thou berest the pryce, and of alle mesures of blowynge thou art the begynnynge, and of alle the termes of huntynge and of hawkynge ye are the beginner, and of alle instruments of musike ye are the beste; therefore, gentyl Knygt, sayd Arthur, ye are welcome to thys courte."[q] Sir Tristrem himself is eminently an illustration of the extent to which the ancient Celtic traditions have formed the groundwork of romance, and if we could act the part of a "gentyl squire" to this noble knight and his valorous compeers,

"Sir Lancelot, Sir Stephen bold,"

as well as

—— "Syr Banier, and Syr Bore,
And eke Syr Garratt kene,"

and strip them of their shining coats of mail, their "pennons flourished quaint and rare," their spurs and their knightly plumes—we should probably find that they would proceed most quietly to take up their true position on the altar of some dark temple, where for long ages

—— "dim pagan rites were done,"

q Morte d'Arthur.

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and where their most ancient "laudatores" would, in like manner, appear as a solemn company of Druids or Dröttnar.

But the North of Britain abounded in certain "rare and pleasant monsters," the extermination of which formed the chief employment of the good knights who assembled round King Arthur, when he held his "cour plenière" at "merry Carlisle." There was the "Laidly worme of Spindlestone Heugh," concerning whom

> "Word went east, and word went west,
> And word went over the sea;
> That a Laidly worm in Spindlestone Heugh,
> Would ravage the North Countrie."

Again, there was the Dragon of Sockburne, described by Blount as a "monstrous creature, a worme, or flying serpent," "that devoured men, women, and children," and killed by Sir John Conyers; and above the south entrance of the ancient parish church of Linton, in Roxburghshire, is a rude piece of sculpture representing a knight with a falcon on his arm, encountering with his lance in full career a sort of monster which the common people call a worm or snake. Tradition asserts, that while sleeping with its mouth open, the Laird of Luriston, a man brave even to madness, coming upon the snake at full gallop, thrust down its throat a *peat*, (a piece of turf dried for fuel,) dipped in scalding pitch, and fixed to the point of his lance. The noble family of Somerville are said to be descended from this adventurous Knight, in memory of whose achievement they bear a dragon as their crest.[r] The ballad of Kempion again tells of a ladye fair, changed by witching spell to the form of a fierce dragon, breathing flames—

> "And relieved shall ye never be,
> Till Kempion, the kingis' son,
> Come to the crag, and thrice kiss ye."

r Introduction to the ballad of Kempion—Border Minstrelsy, vol. iii.

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Moreover, Syr Guy of Warwick killed a very portentous dragon in Northumberland—

" He was as black as any coal
Rugged as a rough foal—
His body, from the navel upward,
No man can pierce it is so hard—
His neck is grete as any sommere,[s]
He runneth as swift as any destrère,
Paws he hath as any lion,
All that he toucheth, he slayeth dead down;
Great wings he hath to flight,
There is no man that bear him might;
There may no man fight hym again,
But that he slayeth him certayn—
For a fouler beast than is he
I wys, of none never heard ye."[t]

But amongst all the dragons whereof mention is made in history, that over which Syr Bevis of Hampton gained a victory bears the bell:

——— " Syr Lancelot du Lake
Fought with the brennynge drake—
Guy of Warwick, I understand,
Slew a dragon in Northumberland;
But such a dragon was never sene
As by Syr Bevis slew, I wene."

There were two of these monsters in Calabria,—one of them very injudiciously flew to the Court of Rome, where, as might naturally have been expected, he immediately became immovable;

" Men say he is there yet
Enclosed round with clerke's wit:"

the other came to Cologne. Syr Bevis, moved with com-

s Beast of burden.

t Syr Guy of Warwick—(Ellis, vol. ii. pp. 59, 60.)

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passion, determined to attack him; and in spite of the worme's hideous yell, slashed at him with his good sword, Morglay; and though the first lash of the dragon's tail broke one of his ribs and felled him to the ground, he continued the battle with great obstinacy, until "in retreating to avoid the poisonous breath of the dragon, he fell backwards into a well full of water. Luckily for him, a female saint had bathed in this water, and had thereby imparted to it such marvellous efficacy, that whilst it healed the wound, and restored the almost exhausted strength of the Christian hero, it effectually impeded the attack of the dragon. Sir Bevis now renewed the combat; but the serpent spouting on him about a gallon of venom, he instantly fell senseless to the ground, where his enemy continued to whip him with his tail, until he whipped him a second time into the miraculous well. Here he again recovered his senses, and began to say his prayers with much devotion; after which he issued forth, having adjusted his armour, and wielded the good sword Morglay with a degree of vigour which his wearied enemy was no longer willing to encounter. The dragon now began to retreat in his turn; but Bevis following him had the good fortune to cut off about five feet of that wicked tail, from which he had suffered such dreadful bruises; after which he had little difficulty in severing the monster's head from his body." [u]

It becomes difficult, from the extent to which these dragon legends have been propagated, to mark at all accurately the sources from which they originally spring. Like the Celts, the old Norwegians had innumerable stories of dragons who slept all day on the golden "horde," and at night flew through the air with fiery wings; and we might

u Ellis—Sir Bevis of Hauntoun.

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go further back still, to that central Eastern Land, whence all our legend and history had its birth, and tell how

> ——— "the Gryphon through the wilderness
> With winged course, o'er hill and moory dale
> Pursues the Arimaspian, who by stealth,
> Had from his wakeful custody purloined
> The guarded gold; * * * *

but there appear numerous reasons why we should assign a Celtic origin to this great family of North British Dragons: those enormous serpent temples, which stretched for miles over hill and dale, have furnished the type for much of the dragon of romance, as well as for that of the ancient world: and there existed at Shap, in Westmoreland, a gigantic structure of this nature. It extended for seven miles, and, like that of Carnac in Britanny, its termination is even then doubtful. Let it be remembered too, that Druidism, with all the singular principles of the Neo-Platonists attending its later revival, continued long in these districts—Cumbria, namely, and Strath-Clyde—and we shall see no cause for wondering at their having been made a great centre in the romance traditions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Thomas the Rhymer—the Ladye Guenever—Merlin—and King Arthur—have divided between them the whole of this tract of country. Of the two royal personages, I shall say nothing at present; but the Rhymer himself has had his name inseparably connected with a spot which there is strong reason for looking on as one of the old sacred locations of the Druids—the Eildon Hills. Their triple height rising so strangely over the whole of the flat country around—the "Spirits of Power" which constantly assembled thereon—and above all, that famous interview with the Queen of Elf-land, when she came

> "Riding down by the Eildon tree;"

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all these bring back irresistibly the triple hill of the Isle of Avalon, with its aërial dwellers: again, Northumbria and the Lothians were distinguished from very early ages as inhabited by races of the most opposite origins, and they have undergone perhaps more singular vicissitudes than any other districts of the kingdom. I am not about to enter into what has emphatically been called "the great Pictish question," for however interested I may personally feel in King Brude and King Nectan, "et hoc genus omne," I do not consider myself justified in inflicting on this much-endurant Society any dissertations on these most ancient and princely personages. I may, however, be allowed to remark, that intermarriages and constant intercourse seem to have been kept up between the Britons of Strath-Clyde and their northern neighbours, the Picts; and that the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon colonies adjoining, by no means entertained hostile feelings towards either: moreover, legions of Frisians and Batavians were stationed along the great northern walls, and these may well be supposed to have brought with them their own mythologies, legends, and traditions, since we know them to have been peculiarly struck with the wild and sylvan character of the country, from the many altars inscribed "Diis Sylvestribus," with numerous other barbaric deities unknown save by this means: from this commixture of nations, as well as from the late continuance of Druidism, the Romance Literature appears to have almost a distinct birth in North Britain; the number of poems written in a strong northern dialect, and abounding in references to places situated on either side of the Border, is exceedingly great; and I need not mention those glorious old ballads which have flung the deepest spirit of poetry over every hill, and forest, and stream—from the haunted banks of Yarrow, to where

"The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall."

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These "old and antique pieces of song," however, afford the very strongest proof of that intermingling of ideas before alluded to; for the Swedish and Danish ballads are frequently identical in every respect with those which linger on the Tweed and the Ettrick. The marriage of Syr Gawayne, who met a most "lothly lady, sitting under a "green hollyne," and with the utmost complaisance made her an offer of an endowment with all his worldly goods," strikingly after the fashion of certain "sad Delias" and "mournful Strephons," is equally to be found in the Norsk; and numerous incidents in the Romance of Ywain and Gawain are reproduced in the Heldenbuch and Lay of the Niebelung.

But the great centre of Druid Christianity was unquestionably Armorica, or Bas Bretagne: a portion of the continent forming a huge peninsular in the Western Ocean, then considered as very stormy and dangerous, and on the land side covered by enormous and impenetrable forests and marshes—there was a singular Litany that used to be sung by the Breton sailors, which will at once explain the term I have used above, "Druid Christianity." After a vow of going to the chapel of Aurai, came

"St. Cloadic, whose bell warns what good can be done and what evil avoided—

Ora pro nobis.

"St. Vouga and St. Budoc, who cross the seas upon a rock—

Ora pro nobis.

"St. Guenolé, who drew from the gizzard of a swan the eye of thy beloved sister, and replaced'st it without decay or injury—

Ora pro nobis.

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"St. Didier, who givest to bread blessed upon thy altar the power of causing children to speak—

Ora pro nobis.

"St. Telo, who appearest seated on a running stag, and sleepest on flints which turn into flowers—

Ora pro nobis.

"St. Herbot, who makest butter come; and St. Ives, who causest dough to rise—

Ora pro nobis.

"St. Sane whose iron collar strangles the perjured—

Ora pro nobis."

The celebrated tract subsequently known in British Romance, by the name of the Wood of Broceliant,[v] was a part of this region, and seems to have extended to the woods of Rosmah, beyond the Seine, near Rouen; to the sea coast, opposite the Island of St. Michael; including the woods of Guingamp and Lannyon; and even as far as the impenetrable forests about Lusignan in Poitou: for the name in the Breton Romances seems general for all those mysterious wildernesses which were the scenes of prodigies clearly connected with the ancient Druid worship, and afterwards remarkable for the number of those most ancient monkish establishments, whose extensive landed property and privileges never appear to have been conceded out of private patrimonies, nor to have been resumed when other church lands were seized by the crown; and whose original institutions are avowedly stated to have been designed to watch, and by their superior sanctity to overawe, the pagan and demon powers asserted to be the tenants of the vicinity. Among the numerous abbeys, convents, nunneries, priories, cells, chapels, oratories, and crosses, the most

v Broch' allean—Wood of the Hermit—(Cte. de la Villemarqué.)

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remarkable was that of Begard, on the hills of the present department of Cotes-du-Nord, once the great central college of the Armorican Druids, subsequently a Roman colony known by the name Corsulitæ. [w] This place still shews considerable remains, particularly of a temple of Mars. On the ruins of the pagan college rose the above abbey, and in the middle ages it was renowned for the prodigies that happened there and around it. Second sight was the privilege of the abbot, who knew when to prepare a funeral for the dead before the event: the benighted traveller could not proceed out of the sound of its bells, for by some secret influence he was sure to wander till the morning found him before the church door: this was on the edge of the awful wood, and there also was buried Guenclan, the Merlin or Taliesin of the Armoricans, and their chief Druid.

In that forest legends and traditions placed one residence of the mysterious Arthur: his voice answered to the responses of his twelve peers; the sound of their jingling bridles, and the notes of their shadowy horns could be heard on calm nights re-echoing through the wood, while the spectre heroes passed from the Castle of Gael to hunt the phantom stag; there was the spot where Merlin was confined under the spell of the fairy Vivienne; and it was hence that Morgan le Fay carried off Ogier the Dane.

In the wilder woods, such as Montfort and Paimport, and again in the woods of Lorges, the affrighted wanderer beheld mysterious fountains, fire, and smoke, and heard thunder, strange echoes, and whispering voices: here too was a ruin, containing a damosel of surpassing beauty laid by enchantment in a death-like sleep; only at sunset she would wake, and pour forth such marvellous melody, that

w The neighbouring district belonged to the Corsulitæ.

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"all things in wonder and delight were still." The nightingale, says the history, sat silent on her spray, and the wild flowers opened their cups once more to hear the charmed strain: farther on, by a torrent and pool covered with water-lilies, dwelt a certain female hermit, who lived on food brought by doves;—but the great wonder of the forest was the district possessed by a monster called the "Karl of Kaymes;" he was, says the romance,

> ——— "the fowlest wight
> That ever yet saw man in sight:"

and his description, it must be confessed, places him beyond all hope of competition; he rejoiced in the possession of elephants' ears, the nose of a cat, tusks like a boar, and a "full great" bulge upon his back; moreover, he had but one leg, and that made of granite; his weedes were very peculiar, being neither of "wool, ne of line," and he leant on a huge oak tree for a staff. This delightful personage was the keeper of certain enchanted flocks of lions, tygers, bears, and wolves, which roamed in this part of the wood, and after passing him, the Knight who was bold enough to undertake the adventure, descended to a hollow, where grew a wondrous thorn—

> "So thyk it was with leues grene
> That might no rayn com ther bitwene;
> And that grene lastes ay,
> For no winter dere it may."

and underneath the thorn was a block of emerald standing on four rubies, which shed a light over all the ground; adjoining was a well having a golden basin attached, and whoever poured water from this well on the emerald would raise a storm unexampled in wildness and horror; after

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the storm, a flock of birds came from some unknown region and lighted on the tree—

> "Full pleasant was the melodye
> Of their song and of their crye."

and whilst the Knight was lost in wonder thereat, he discerned a rival in black armour, mounted on a black steed, with black trappings, with whom he must do battle. If he were fortunate enough to overcome this more than mortal adversary, he might advance to the pass of the twelve bleeding crosses, and next to the more open glades, styled "des injures et des pardons," of wrath and forgiveness, where, within the cluster of rocks impenetrably covered with briars and wild roses, lived the nine Gallicenæ, whose abode was not to be found, but by him whose life was innocent, and whose soul was brave. To him futurity might be revealed, and presents were given, such as the mantle of Eric, embroidered with the mysteries of arithmetic, music, and astronomy. Here the good Knight, Tristan le Restoré, was nursed, and taught to play on the harp so as to exceed all men; and the names of all worthy champions of chivalry were inscribed on the rocks about.

To see all these wonders, Master Robert Wace set out in the twelfth century; but he had either not sufficient faith, or was otherwise unqualified, for he deplores his disappointment most amusingly.

> "I journeyed there the Fays to see,
> For wondrous land is Brittany—
> Yet missed I every pleasant wonder,
> Trees did I see, and greensward under—
> Folly I sought—a pleasant game—
> Fool set I out—fool home I came."

Some time after, however, Hugo de Mery describes, in his

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poem entitled "The Tournament of Antichrist," the whole of the marvels from ocular inspection;[x] and as they probably remain still, it is to be hoped that some zealous member of the Society will forthwith proceed thither, and bring home a more full account of the Black Knight and the Lady of the Fountain.

The proofs that these ideas are genuinely Celtic, and not derived from any external source, but of Druidic origin, would occupy far too much time to be laid before the Society on the present occasion. Although we have evidence that a fresh accession of mythological tradition poured into Brittany from Wales and Cornwall in the fifth and sixth centuries, it is nevertheless from the first-named country that our own great cycle of romance, the Arthuric, seems to have sprung—for Geoffrey of Monmouth, the first collector of these traditions, avowedly obtained his materials from Brittany. This unfortunate personage has been subjected, from the earliest period, to the indignation of every wrathful antiquary who has investigated the subjects of which he writes, ending with the immortal Ritson, who says emphatically, and with great energy, "this man telleth most abominable lies!" Giraldus Cambrensis asserteth, "that a certain Melerius, haunted by vast myriads of devils, was freed from his unpleasant visitors when the Gospel of St. John was laid on his breast; but on this being removed, and Master Geoffrey's veritable history substituted, they returned in greater numbers, and sat with infinite glee both on his body and on the book:"[y] nevertheless, Mr. President, this may reasonably be supposed to have been an audacious calumny, since later investigators have most satisfactorily proved the genuine nature of the documents from which Geoffrey drew his history. Armorica

x Abbé de la Rue—Histoire des Bardes, Trouvères, et Jongleurs, vol. i.
y Giraldus Cambrensis—quoted by the Author of Britannia after the Romans *note* p. xxii.

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was then, as it long continued, the great centre of Celtic tradition, and distinguished by huge stone monuments unequalled throughout Europe. Amongst the innumerable evidences of ancient mythology yet existing in the national songs and ballads, that of the metempsychosis is most conspicuous. In the Lay of Guenclan, a toad watches the dying moments of an hostile prince, to catch his spirit in passing; and the bard himself asserts that "all must die three times before final repose:"[z] and similarly with Taliesin he asserts, that he had been "a deer on the mountain, and a high bounding steed:" the belief is curiously marked in an old Scottish ballad, where a "rusty Smith" is pursuing a fair ladye—

"Then she became a turtle dow
And flew up in the air;
And he became another dow,
And they flew pair and pair.

She turned herself into an eel
To swim into yon burn,
And he became a speckled trout
To give the eel a turn.

Then she became a duck, a duck
Upon a reedy lake;
And the Smith wi' her to soom or dive
Became a rose-kamed drake."[a]

and here also we have the repetition of the Welch legend of Ceridwen, and the great oriental story of the princess who devoured the Efreet in the shape of a pomegranate. But again, the passing of the soul after death through various regions, as believed by the Bretons, is eminently Druidical. The place of happy spirits is even yet believed to be an

z Barzaz Breiz, vol. I.—Prediction de Guenelan.
a Buchan's Ballads of the north of Scotland.

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"isle planted with apple trees, such as was Avalon, and whose sward is covered with flowers of most exquisite hues and perfume;[b] amongst which is a fountain at which the Spirits drink to receive a new existence." Here again their ideas receive illustration from those prevalent in the Celtic districts of Britain. In the "dead men's song" given by Ritson, occurs a passage speaking of Paradise—

"The fields about this city fair
Were all with roses set;
Gillyflowers and carnations fair
Which canker could not fret."[c]

and so in the ballad of Clerk Saunders—

"Their beds are made in the heavens high,
Down at the foot of our good Lord's knee—
Weel set about wi' gillyflowers;
I wot sweet company for to see!"

and again in "The Wife of Usher's Well"—

"It fell about the Martinmas,
When nights are lang and mirk;
The Carline wife's three sons came hame
And their hats were o' the birk.

It neither grew in syke nor ditch,
Nor yet in ony sheugh;
But at the gates of Paradise
That birk grew fair eneugh."

The mode of access again to these regions was full of difficulties; the soul had to pass the valley of the waters of anguish and the stream of bones; deep hollows filled with blood, such as those passed by Thomas the Rhymer when for seven long days of darkness he heard nothing but the

b Barzaz Breiz. vol. 1. p. 193—"Le Frère de Lait." c Ritson's Ancient Songs, 283.

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"swowynge of the flode," surrounded the passing spirit on all sides—and finally the sea was to be crossed, on the edge of which the mouth of the infernal regions opened to receive the condemned soul.[d] There is much difficulty in determining, however, whether this passage was to be undergone by all spirits, or only by those of evil men—though it would seem that the original pagan idea was the former. A curious portion of the belief occurs in a MS. of the Cotton Library, containing an account of Cleveland in Yorkshire. "When anye dyeth, certayne women singe a song to the dead bodye recytynge the journeye that the partye deceased must go: and they are of beliefe, (such is their fondnesse,) that once in their lives it is good to give a pair of new shoes to a poor manne, forasmuch as after thys lyfe they are to passe barefoote through a great launde full of thornes and furzen, excepte by the meritte of the almes aforesayd they have redeemed the forfeyt; for at the edge of the launde an old manne shal meete them with the same shoes that were gyven by the partie when he was lyvyng; and after he hath shodde them dismisseth them to go thro' thick and thin without scratche or scalle."

The innumerable host of Breton superstitions noticed by Marchagny and Villemarqué shew how strongly this district clung to the ancient belief; and, mingled as they are with Orientalism and the Eddaic mythology, yet exhibit features so peculiar as at once to stamp their native origin:—thus on wedding days double rations are given to the cattle and poultry; but particularly to the *avettes* or bees the festival is extended; the hives being covered with red stuff, and flowers strewed round them; whilst on deaths the bees are informed of it and the hives covered with black. The baker woman of the lord had privilege of sanctuary or pro-

d Barzas Breiz.

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tection to malefactors during the space from the commencement of bread-making until she had done collecting the paste with the scraper; and had also the right of sitting at her work and not rising therefrom for any person whatsoever. Sore throat is cured by hanging a branch of the plum tree in blossom on the fire hook: pain in the neck by wearing a silver plate with the figure of a bull upon it. At the chapel of Aurai, one of the innumerable little oratories erected in the glades of the forests, butter formed into the shape of a cow, or sheep, and living young wild boars were offered. Bread baked on Christmas eve will keep ten years without spoiling; and then too food is left on the table in hopes that the Virgin will come and eat. No cabbage is eaten on St. Stephen's day, for he was once concealed amongst them; whilst egg shells thrown into the fire will cause St. Lawrence to be burnt a second time. I have before remarked that Lusignan in Poitou is the apparent boundary of the mystic districts—and this castle is indeed a place of prodigies. The spectre Melusine, half woman, half serpent, screams in the night from the battlements when any fatal event is about to happen to one of the race. She was wife of Raymond of Poitiers, and had eight children who were seen as spectres—one with one eye red and the other blue—another with elephants' ears —a third with a lion's paw, and the rest with signs more or less fearful. Spectres indeed flitted around in all directions; the marshes boiled up, and whilst enchanted bells were heard ringing beneath the water, Courils or Dwarfs came out and led the affrighted traveller astray. Benzoria, the funeral witch, called here her Holda, or meeting of Sorceresses—here wandered whole flocks of wehr wolves, and the queu or cook of the Lord of Melle saw two men in glittering armour bearing a flaming sword; one of whom fell, and gave a cry that was heard as far as Angers.

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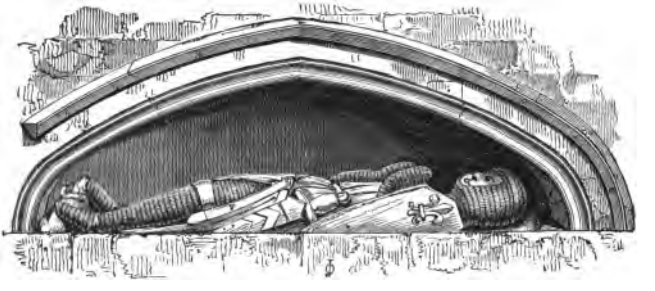
The theories therefore of Warton and other writers who would assert that the romantic fiction of Western Europe derived all its supernatural machinery, and consequently all its peculiar character, from extraneous sources, may be considered to be altogether overthrown by later research The Abbé de la Rue, Michel, Roquefort, Ellis, and even Ritson, have incontrovertibly shewn that the mythology of the earlier periods, gradually altering and assuming a totally novel aspect on the introduction of Christianity, (though be it remembered far from being altogether eradicated,) has produced all those marvellous tales of dragons, giants, and fairies, which delighted the old knight and the gentle damosel, and which yet afford delight even in this most matter-of-fact æra. Moreover, the actual Breton originals of certain Lays of Marie de France have recently been published, thus adding certainty to what was already certain. A new and most important element, however, in the formation of romance demands our consideration, in adverting to which I shall commence a fresh chapter.



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CHAPTER IV.

ORIENTAL INFLUENCE ON ROMANCE.

"Fair shone the sun upon their proud array,
White turbans, glittering armour, shields engrail'd
With gold, and scimitars of Syrian steel;
And gently did the breezes, as in sport,
Curl their long flags outrolling, and display
The blazon'd scrolls of blasphemy."
Roderick, the Last of the Goths.

"A NEW land," wrote Musa to the Caliph Walid Almanzor, "a new land spreads itself out before our delighted eyes, and invites our conquest; a land too that equals Syria in the fertility of its soil, and the serenity of its sky—Yemen, or Arabia the happy, in its delightful temperature—India, in its flowers and spices—Hegias, in its fruits—Cathay, in its precious minerals—and Aden in the excellence of its ports and harbours! It is populous also and wealthy; having many splendid cities, and majestic monuments of ancient art. What is to prevent this glorious land from becoming the inheritance of the faithful? Already have we overcome the tribes of Berbery or Zab, of Derar, of Zaara, Mazamuda, and Sus; and the victorious standard of Islam floats on the towers of Tangier. But four leagues of sea separate us from the opposite coast. One word from my sovereign, and the conquerors of Africa will pour their legions into Andalusia, rescue it from the domination of

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the unbeliever, and subdue it to the Law of the Koran!" "Allah Akbar! God is great!" exclaimed the Caliph, "and Mohammed is his prophet—yea! it is the will of Allah!" so messengers were sent to Musa, and the armies of the faithful landed beneath the Rock of Tarik.

And here, Mr. President, I must request this learned Society to pause; and having imagined themselves for once possessed of

> ——— "that hors of brasse
> Whereon the Tartar king did ride,"

that they will proceed to mount thereon, without delay, and float over sea, and river, and moor, and mountain, until we look down between the lofty ridges of the Sierra Nevada on the glorious old city of Granada, with all its towers and minarets, so gorgeous with their arabesque ornaments of purple and gold; and as we have annihilated space, so let us proceed to treat the more formidable enemy, time, and roll back the mist of years, until the whole wondrous scene lies before us as in the days of Mousa and Tarik. It is indeed a scene such as may scarcely be looked upon in these twilight times, and such as but seldom spread out in all its beauty before the wandering knights of old. There are the red towers of the Alhambra rising high on their lofty ridge above the wild barranca,—and enclosing innumerable courts where the perfumed air is heavy with the scent of the roses of Damascus, and musical with the dashing of the fountain into its silver basin. Its halls too with their long arcaded fronts, hung with tapestries of the eastern loom, and decorated with sentences from the Koran; where the blazing gem and the good red gold are alternated with strange and unknown woods of wondrous beauty and inestimable value—and the gentle stream of the Darro, with its citrons and its vines, its bright flowers and its olive

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trees, gliding like a silver thread through the Vega or plain—where the waving corn field spreads in all its beauty, and round which the wild hills raise their snowy crests till it lies enfolded amongst them as some bright and dazzling gem—such is indeed a fit scene for the noble figures which ever and anon sweep forth in glittering procession from beneath the lofty gates of the city—

"They pass the Elvira gate, with banners all displayed,
They pass in mickle state, a noble cavalcade;—
What proud and pawing horses! what comely cavaliers!
What bravery of targets! what glittering of spears!

What caftans blue and scarlet! what turbans pleached of green!
What wavings of their crescents and plumages between!
What buskins and what stirrups! what rowels chased in gold!
What noble cavaliers! what buoyant hearts and bold!"[e]

To enumerate one half of the novel science—the stream of Oriental imagery and poetry, which, acting more immediately on the professors of the Langue d'oc, or Troubadours of Provence, Gascony, and the South of France, was also diffused throughout the chivalric literature of Europe, would most effectually exhaust the patience of the Society, already sufficiently tried: yet there are certain points which can hardly be passed over even in such a rapid view as the present. A communication with Spain seems to have been kept up by the British Druids from a very early period; for Taliesin asserts that he had been there, in the same remarkable poem in which he mentions his having composed an ode in Hebrew: and the later bards exhibit a very extraordinary mixture of rabbinical traditions with the ancient Celtic mythology. The chief mode indeed by

e Lockhart—"The Vow of the Moor Reduan."

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which these oriental ideas were diffused, would appear to be the trading character of the Spanish Jews, who were the great merchants and physicians of the period, and great numbers of whom were constantly to be found in Britain. Petrus Alphonsus, a converted Jew, who flourished in the twelfth century, avowedly compiled his singular book entitled "Castoiement d'un Père à son Fils," from the Arabian fabulists: it consists of tales and legends intended to divert the sick, the compiler being a physician. But by far the most remarkable composition where Eastern ideas are conspicuous, is the famous book of the Sangreal—the most celebrated of the romances of Arthur.

The Sangreal or Holy Vessel was the cup used by our Saviour at his last supper, and subsequently employed by Joseph of Arimathea to collect the blood which flowed from his side. No one might see this cup or goblet unless he were of pure life and uncontaminated by sin. King Evelake once "nighed too nigh," and became "blasted with excess of light," insomuch that he remained almost blind the rest of his life. The most solemn instance of its agency occurs on the day that Syr Galahad, that "veray parfit gentil knicht" assumed the seat perilous. "Then anon they heard crakyng and cryeing of thunder, that hem thought the place should al to rive. In the midst of the blast entered a sunbeam, more clear by seven times than ever they sawe daye; and all they were alighted of the grace of the Holy Ghost. Then there entred into the hall the Holy Grale covered with white samite; but there was none that might see it nor who bare it; and then was all the hall full filled with good odours, and every knight had such meat and drink as he best loved in thys worlde; and when the Holy Grale had been borne through the halle, then the Holy Vessel departed sodainlie, that they wist not where it became." The wonderful light which streamed from the Sangreal is well worthy of notice, although I can here only allude to its apparent

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identity with the great light of Mithras, by which the Kings of Persia swore:[f] for be it remembered that the worship of Mithras was most extensively introduced at Rome during its later period. A sacred vessel of a similar nature certainly existed in the European mythologies,[g] and is found again in the mystic goblet possessed by the fairies; yet there are the strongest reasons for believing that Oriental ideas have entered into the formation of the "Book of the Sangreal." Wolfram von Eschenbach has devoted his two romances of Titurel and Percival to the history of the discovery and quest of this miraculous vessel, and the theatre of the most important events is laid either in Asia or Africa. But the immediate source of Eschenbach's poem was a Provençal romance written by a certain Kiot or Guiot, who obtained his knowledge of the Graal from a MS. discovered at Toledo, written in a heathen character, of which the troubadour was compelled to make himself master; and the baptismal rite enabled him to accomplish this arduous task without the aid of necromancy. The author of this mysterious reçord was a heathen astronomer, Flegitanis by name, who on his mother's side traced up his genealogy to King Solomon; but having a Saracen father, he had adhered to his paternal faith, and worshipped a calf. Flegitanis was deeply versed in all the motions of the heavenly bodies, and in the hallowed volume deposited at Toledo, he had carefully inscribed the result of his nocturnal studies: mysteriously emblazoned amongst the stars, he had beheld the very name of the Sangraal, together with the important fact, that a band of spirits had left it upon earth as they winged their way to their celestial abodes.

f The Light, or revelation of the Cabalists;—*Or hajaschor*, self-existent light.—*Or haschoser*, reflected light.—(Philos. de la Tradition, p. 54.)

g It is the golden cup in which Hercules traversed the ocean, and

> That flower of many honours, dwelt upon
> By old prophetic light in time of yore,

the Lotus, or Water-lily.

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The acquisition of this knowledge stimulated Kyot to further inquiries; and having perused the Chronicles of Brittany, France, and Ireland, without much success, he at length found the whole story recounted in the annals of Anjou. Divested of its extraordinary colouring, we may receive the whole narrative as amounting to this—that Kyot was indebted to an Arabic original for some of his details, and that the rest were collected from European records of the same fiction. A large proportion of the names are of decidedly Oriental origin—the very word "Graal" itself signifying a *cup* in Sanscrit. The Saracens are always spoken of with consideration—and the Arabic appellations of the seven planets are distinctly enumerated.

A most remarkable history is given by Eschenbach of the sanctuary or temple built for the preservation of the Graal in the mountains of Navarre. The materials were of the most costly and imperishable description, and the outline of the building was unexpectedly discovered upon a rock of onyx, which the day before had been cleared of the weeds and herbage that encumbered it. The access was rendered invisible to all, except the chosen few, by an impervious forest of cedar, cypress, and ebony, which surrounded it; and by the daily contemplation of the Graal, the lives of those chosen few were prolonged to more than five hundred years. That we have here an account of one of those singular Neo-Druidic establishments, occurring again at Montserrat, and in numerous places in the South of France, noticed by Reinaud, is proved by the discovery of numerous seals, ornaments, &c. inscribed with gnostic and astrological devices: and the whole history of the Sangraal has been considered by Price and others as connected with certain ideas of the Neo-Platonists, very generally diffused at this period.

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CONCLUSION.

"ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH, DEAR FRIENDS, ONCE MORE."

THE days are gone by when the Origin of Romance would be sought for amongst any single people, or in any single series of facts: there was an incessant intercourse kept up between the nations of Europe during the Middle Ages, bound together as they were by one spirit of Chivalry, by one system of Feudality:—Pilgrims and Monks travelling from shrine to shrine and from monastery to monastery—Vassals constantly seeking protection under new lords—Jews and Merchants, whose life was one of incessant wandering, contributed to the general spread of the wild and marvellous; but above all, the roving disposition and habits of the minstrel effected the constant intercourse of ideas and feelings, and the same romance which resounded in the halls of King Alonzo the Wise, might be heard during the long nights of winter around the blazing hearths of the distant Iceland. Hence also that singular pictorial and descriptive power possessed as well by the trouvère as by the Scalld. There is a strange sort of half glimmering light reflected from all the early poetry and literature of the

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North, like the faint Aurora of their own winter sky, which, with all its wild accompaniments—the sound of the waves dashing against the rocks, mingled with the wailing of the winds and the cries of the sea birds—the mists flying along the dark hollows of the mountains, and the deep sounding of the innumerable cataracts descending in their wild recesses—is irresistibly brought before us as we turn over the pages of the Egils-saga or the Land-nama-bòk. There is about their literature and their country the magic spell of unbroken antiquity, and in approaching the one or the other it is impossible not to feel as though some mighty power of gramarye had rolled back the mists of ages, and brought once again before us those grim old sea wolves, with their enchanted swords, and their ships built in fairy land. We follow them to the battle field and the forest—to the wild sea strand, where the red light of their bale fires is streaming up over the dark rocks, and their fierce cries are re-echoed by the distant howling of the "wolf of the wold,"—and into the huge hall of rough pine logs, where the mead is poured forth from a hundred shells, and the Scalld is singing the praises of the "Death-giver,"—the "joy of heroes," the dark brown sword. They are actually present, so strongly and vividly are they brought before us in the Saga and the Lay—and the mantle of these old bards who filled the halls of King Eric of the bloody axe, has descended worthily, and not in vain, on the Anglo-Norman trouvère, and the Menestril of Queen Alice la Belle. We know that there was a peculiar perception of nature in the Middle Ages, which is as certainly unappreciated in the present day: a perception which, to use the beautiful words of a modern writer, has made every page of Chaucer to "sparkle in the dew of morning—has bathed Spenser in the sylvan shade;" and more or less has visited all those crowned phantoms who hold their stand

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in the misty porch of English poetry. True, that in those early days no wanderers "in search of the picturesque" inundated the country from one side to the other, yet if we may judge from the romance and the chronicle, even the unlettered knight in his rude "strength" connected feelings of the deepest interest with the wild beauty which spread in every direction around him,—and the legends which cling around their old towers and time-worn halls yet bear witness to the spirit which animated them in

Days of Yore.

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